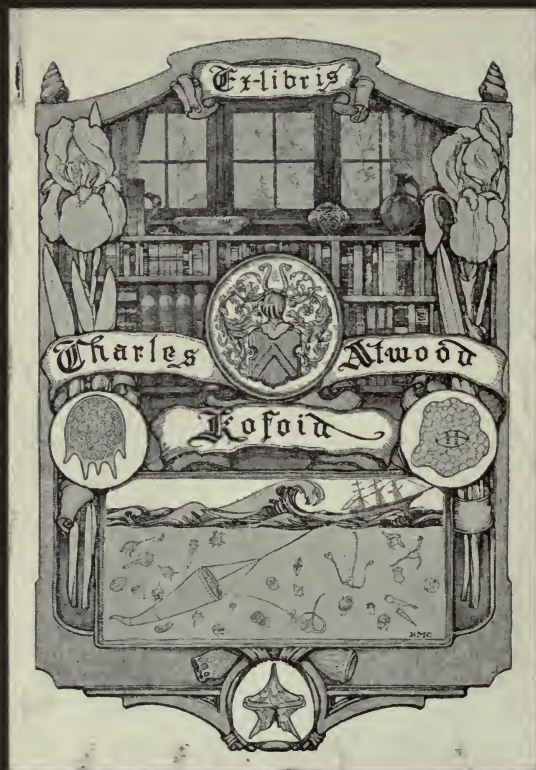




SPORT
AND
Sportsmen:
A
Book of Recollections.
BY
CHARLES STRETTON

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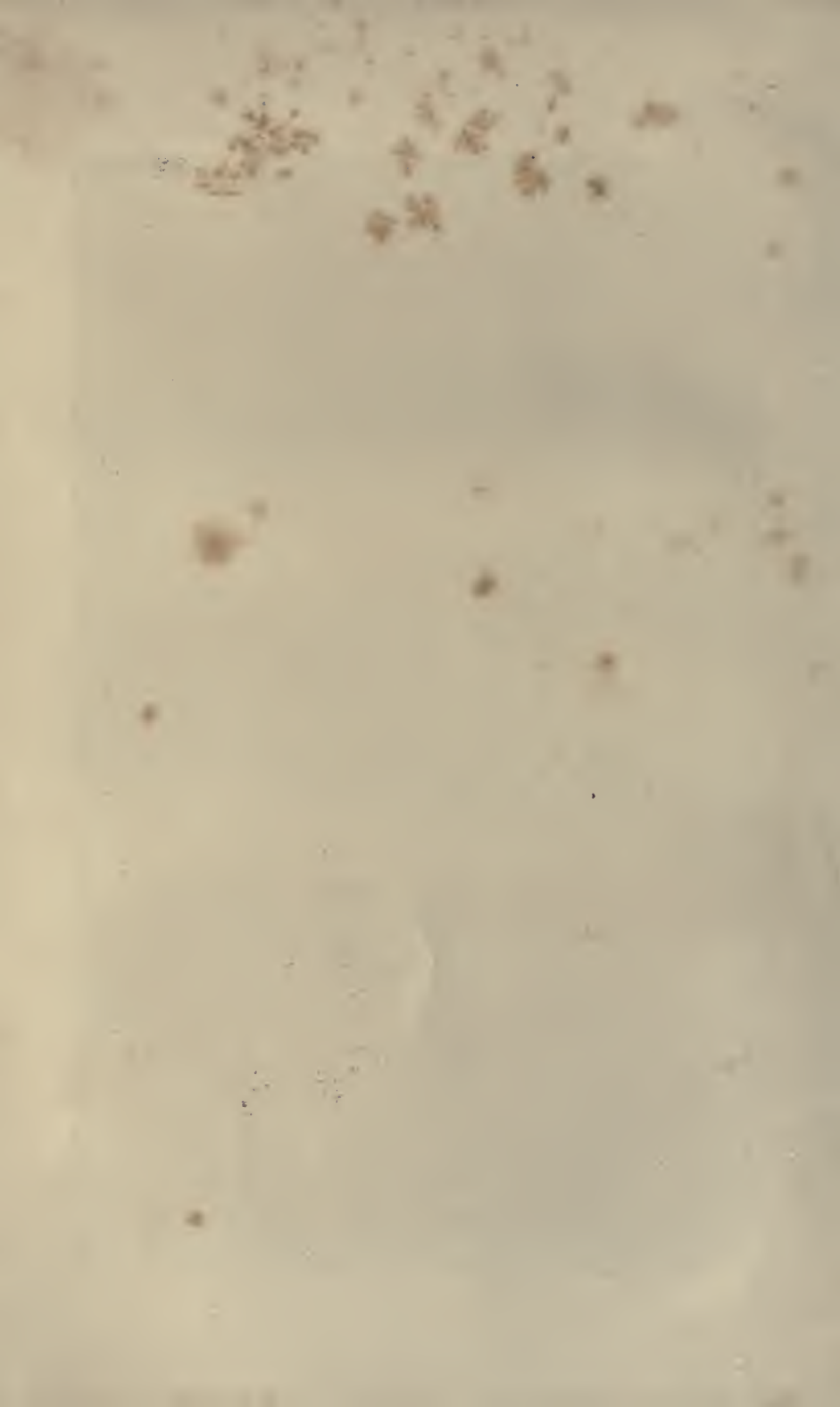


A DECEMBER MORNING IN THE HIGHLANDS.

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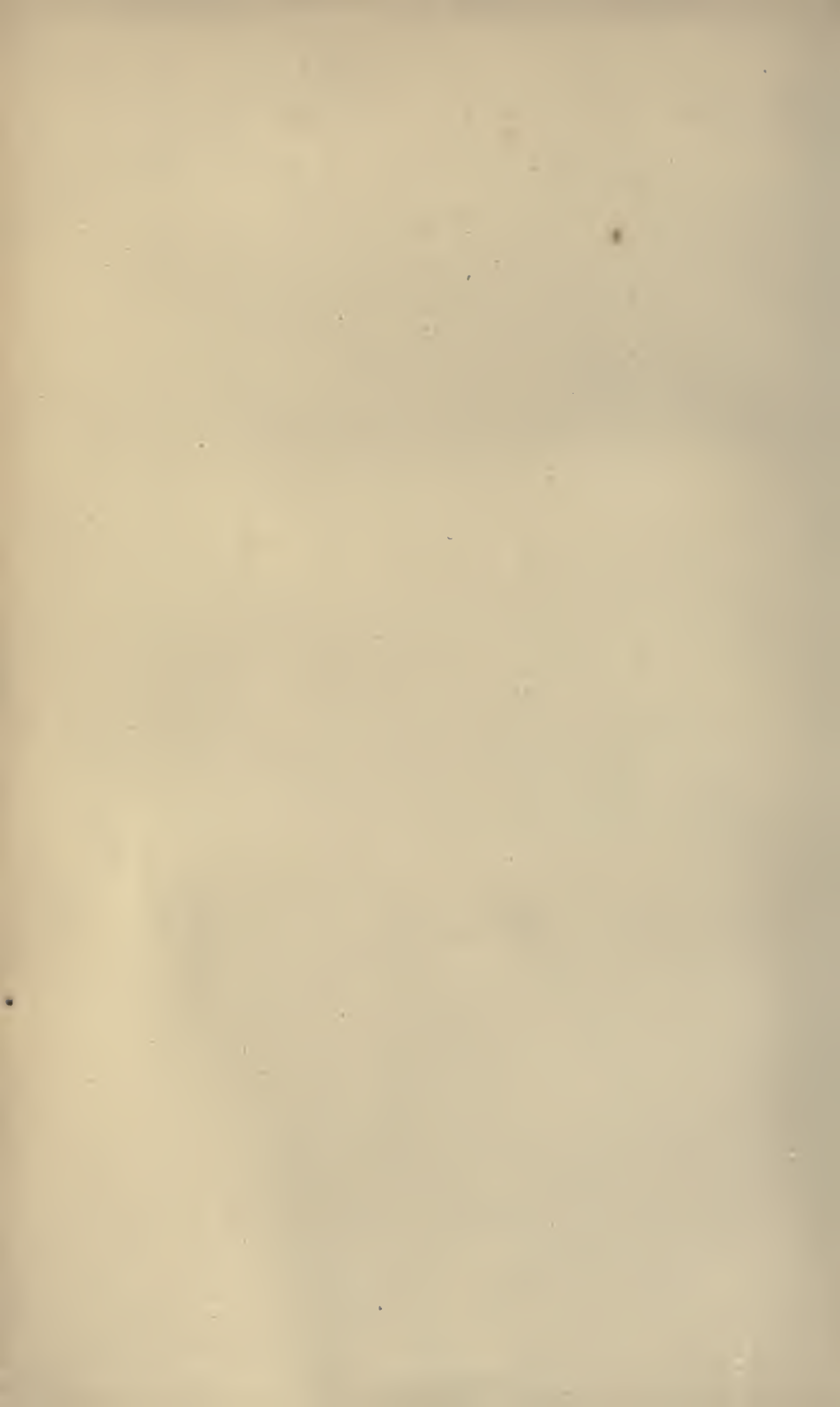
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MY FIRST TRIP TO THE HIGHLANDS.

MY FIRST TRIP TO THE HIGHLANDS.

FEW men would select the month of December as the one in which to visit, for the first time, the most northern part of the United Kingdom; and more especially in a winter of such severity as was that of 1840; but so did *I*. The fact was, seeing an advertisement in a paper to the effect that a gentleman, having a larger shooting than he required (and, indeed, one that was capable of carrying three guns), was desirous of having another person to join him in expenses, I replied to it; and soon after, every arrangement being made through the medium of that intelligent and well known agent, "Mr. Sutherland," of Edinburgh, I quitted the banks of lovely Wye, and, accompanied by my servant and dogs, started by steam for "Auld Reekie."

Had I chosen a day so that everything might be hid from my eyes on my arrival, I could not have succeeded better; for although an intense frost had

set in, the fog was of such a density that I could scarcely see one yard before me on landing at Leith. Arrived at my hotel in Prince's Street, Edinburgh, I found darkness made visible even within the house; and thus, in a moment of irritation, giving vent to my feelings in something like a malediction upon Scotia's climate, I determined at once upon starting north.

I may here mention that, through the kindness of a friend well known to many of the best families in Perthshire, I was the bearer of no fewer than twelve letters of introduction. Armed with these missives, I felt perfectly *à mon aise*, as I desired my servant to go and secure two outside seats for Perth, determining to make use of one of my introductory letters at the residence of a gentleman who resided four or five miles distant from that town.

It was twelve o'clock at noon when I took my place on the box-seat of the conveyance that was to bear me to that delightfully situated town, and pleased was I to find, on arriving at Queensferry, every indication of a clearance as regarded the fog, and, indeed, of a bright and sunny afternoon; and before we reached that spot where the first view of the river Tay is obtained, the weather had turned

out lovely. "Well," I said to myself, "might the Romans exclaim, 'Ecce Roma!—Ecce Tiber!'" although, if my remembrance is correct, it was but very little further that that warlike and adventurous nation dared to force their way.

There were few houses of entertainment at Perth more comfortable than the "George," where, at five o'clock that evening, I found myself comfortably seated at dinner. Every one has heard of a Scotch breakfast; I have ever found the principal meal of the day to be no less worthy of remark—only, save me from a "haggis!"

Finding myself the only occupant of the large and comfortable coffee-room, I entered into conversation with the waiter, a civil and apparently very intelligent middle-aged man, and from him gained much information as to the different families resident in the neighbourhood, the introduction to some of whom I carried in my portmanteau, one of which I intended making use of the following day.

"What sort of place is S——?—the name gives an idea of excessive damp," I said.

"Oh! no, sir," replied the waiter; "it lies *on* the Tay; but there never was a drier house. It is a very nice place, and never was there a nicer gen-

tleman than Captain H——. He was very handsome, sir, until he met with that accident—he broke his nose, you know.”

“What a sad pity! I hear that Mrs. H—— is singularly handsome—is such the case?” I asked.

“Yes, sir; she is indeed a splendid lady. But now is your time to see all our Perthshire beauties; the ladies are holding a bazaar, the profits of which are for the benefit of the infirmary—you must go there, sir.”

Telling the waiter that I should certainly seize the opportunity of feasting my eyes upon such a galaxy of beauty as I had been led to understand the county of Perth boasted of possessing, I dismissed him with thanks for the information that he had given me.

The following day was a Saturday, and I determined upon making use of one of my introductory billets, which, after breakfast, I sent by the hands of my servant, who, before the hour of noon had sounded, had brought me a response couched in the most kind and hospitable terms, in which I was requested to have my things ready to be, with myself, transported to the residence of Captain H—— that same afternoon.

“Captain and Mrs. H—— will call for you, sir,

about twelve o'clock. They wish you to accompany them to some bazaar, sir. We are to return with them—nice gentleman, sir."

Upon inquiring whether there was much company in the house, I was told that Mr. C——, of M——, alone was there; whom my man also classed *as a very nice gentleman*.

Young and good-looking, my servant had somehow or another managed to ingratiate himself with the domestics at S——, for he not only expatiated upon the liberality of the hall table, but also on the contents of the stables.

It was about half-past eleven when a well-appointed barouche, drawn by a pair of Cleveland bays, pulled up at the door of the "George." It contained a lady and two gentlemen, one of whom I immediately recognised as Captain H——, from the accident to his nose, and who, but for that, would have been eminently handsome; the other I presumed to be Mr., now Sir ——, the well-known sportsman, and large landed proprietor, in that county.

"I hope you have all things packed, Mr. Stretton?" said Captain H——, these words being the first which he uttered on entering the room.

“We shall be delighted to see you at S——, and for as long as you may choose to remain. Cold time of year to go northward.”

Thanking him, I told him that I would accept his hospitality for two days, at the same time intimating my anxiety to get into Ross-shire, and candidly telling him how it was that I intended going so far north at that inclement time of year.

The introductory part of the business being at an end, he took me to the carriage, and introduced me to Mrs. H—— and his friend. A few minutes afterwards, I made a fourth in the barouche, and was on my way to the Bazaar.

The stalls, as is usual, were held by the leading ladies of the county; and no wonder that the receipts of each day amounted to such fabulous sums, when the power of beauty is taken into consideration.

Much has been said of the beauty of Erin's daughters. Give me that of “Scotia's lassies.” I have seen much of both, and am not prejudiced.

I had made a purchase of some trifling article at the stall held by Mrs. H——, and was wandering through the Bazaar, when I was struck with the excessive beauty of a lady who might perhaps have

weathered seven-and-twenty winters. Walking up to the stall, I was immediately solicited by her to do something for the good of the charity. Who could refuse such a retailer, putting aside the claims that the institution itself possessed.

"Now, there is a pretty cigar-case, sir," she said, handing one to me. "Of course you smoke—every *gentleman* smokes."

Taking the case from the delicate and ungloved hand of the aristocratic stall-keeper, I at once discovered that she was married.

"Can I not tempt you, sir?" she continued.

"May I be permitted to ask one question?" was my reply.

"You may," she answered, with charming frankness.

"Did you work that case yourself?"

"I did," was the response.

"I will take it. How much must I pay for this very pretty case?" I asked, drawing out my purse.

"Five pounds."

The sum I instantly placed, in the shape of a note, within her tiny hand; when she, requesting again to have the case, neatly packed it up, and returned it to me with a demeanour so gracious that it will be

long ere I forget the purchase made at the Perth Bazaar.

“I must tell you, Mr. Stretton, that we all dine at K—— to-night,” said Captain H——, arranging a very handsome rug about his legs, as he drove from the doors of the Town-Hall Lord G—— expects you. It’s only a small party, the M——s, from Scone, and a few others. It is a pity that your first visit to the Highlands should be made at this inclement season, for our county is second to none in the picturesque. Indeed, nowhere will you find a country which exhibits such scenes of striking magnificence, contrasted with the most beautiful marks of civilization; but we must hope that you will favour us with another and more lengthened visit.”

There was a frankness of manner about Captain H—— which affected me much; and when from the lips of his wife I heard fall the same kind expressions, I almost felt sorry that I had limited my stay to two days. Thanking my kind friends, for friends I may presume to call them, I told them of the necessity of my hastening on to Strath——, but promised on my return south to renew the acquaintance which I was not only pleased but proud to have made.

It was late when we reached S——, and but little

time had I to scan either the outside or inside of my friend's residence; for a flat candlestick being put into my hand, I was hurried off to my dressing-room, with the information that we had two miles to go, and that his lordship dined at seven o'clock sharp.

It took me but little time to dress for dinner, and upon entering the drawing-room, into which I was ushered by a servant, I found myself to be the first down stairs. I might have been some ten minutes in the room when the master of the house entered, soon followed by Mrs. — and Mr. C—, and a close carriage being in waiting, we started for the beautiful residence of that late worthy old nobleman, Lord G—, of G—.

It will not perhaps be out of place if I here state that the present building is comparatively a modern one, being raised on the site of the old castle; that castle which housed for some days previous to the fight so beautifully described by the late Sir W. Scott, in the "Fair Maid of Perth," either the clan Chattan or the clan Queil (pronounced Kye), but which I now forget; the other clan receiving at the same time entertainment at Scone Palace.

I have seldom met a more delightful couple than were Lord and Lady G—, although both were

afflicted—the husband having totally lost the use of his legs, whilst the wife suffered from palsy. Despite these drawbacks, I have never witnessed more cheerfulness, more hospitality, than I did at K—— Castle. I have said that the noble owner of that hospitable house was a cripple; he was so, and that dreadfully, but shall I be believed when I say that he was a mechanic of wondrous dexterity? His workshop was indeed worth visiting. Our party was the last to arrive, and appeared to be the signal for dinner, for in less than five minutes that meal of all meals that I love the best was announced; one minute after that I found myself *vis-à-vis* to that charming lady who had so bewitched me out of my five-pound note at the Fancy Bazaar, and who I was pleased to see did not fail to recognize me.

Frequent allusions, as might be expected, were made to the number of visitors at the Town Hall that day, as well as to the amounts each lady had received; and thunder-struck was I when I heard my friend H—— mention the amount that his wife had collected; but that was nothing out of the way, many having far exceeded that sum, and amongst the number Lady ——, my *vis-à-vis*. I was highly amused by listening to the different little incidents

connected with the sales: how Lord A—— had been coaxed into purchasing this, and how Mr. B——, by a little flattery, had been drawn of ten pounds. I know not how it was, but the eyes of Lady —— and mine met, and I fancied that I saw an arch smile pass over her beautiful face. It might, it is true, be imaginary, but I felt that I turned red, and nearly choked myself by swallowing a glass of sherry.

The dinner, although most excellent, was not a protracted one, neither did the ladies remain long after the removal of the cloth, the old lord being wheeled away at the same time into the adjoining room.

But I need not dwell longer on such an uninteresting topic as a dinner party, or dilate upon kindnesses received. Ere we took our departure, the invitation to repeat my visit was given and accepted; and I quitted K——, having formed the highest opinion of the family.

Next day being Sunday, I accompanied Captain H—— and his wife to the Episcopal Church at Perth, where I had an opportunity of again seeing many of the *élite* of the county. The following morning I bade adieu to my friends, intending to start northwards.

Previous to my leaving the hotel, I had ordered a

conveyance to be sent to S——, to bring myself and servant away, but had not taken the precaution to secure seats by the mail for Dingwall, a town some ten miles north of Inverness, where I had to leave the main road; and upon inquiry at the office, I found that the mail was full as far as Blair Athole, distance thirty-two miles. A more lovely morning for the time of year I never saw; and the pure northern air must in some way have raised my spirits to a height more than usual, for I determined at once to walk on until overtaken by the mail, leaving my servant to secure places and to bring on my luggage. Cramming a few articles of linen and other necessities into a knapsack, I started, pack on back, for Dunkeld, that little town as celebrated for the beauty of its surrounding scenery as for the salubrity of its air.

How well do I remember calling for a glass of ale that evening at a humble little inn at Birnam. That humble house of entertainment is now replaced by an hotel second to none, and its grounds and green drives by the river side are unequalled. The sun was just setting as I entered Dunkeld, where I soon made myself remarkably comfortable at Grant's Hotel. How many are there who have made

the "grand tour," been up the Rhine, visited every canton in Switzerland, even gone as far as Naples and Palermo, and yet have never seen one half the beauties of their own country!

I will take the county of Perth alone—can it be surpassed? I have travelled much and far. I know nothing to recall the scenery immediately around the little town that owns his Grace of Athole as its lord. The same delightfully bright and frosty morning greeted my opening eyelids as had done so the day previously, and made me long to be again *en route*, although a feeling of disappointment did come over me at the thought of leaving so many beautiful spots unvisited, scenes which seventeen years later became well known to me.

No sooner was my breakfast finished than I started again for Blair Athole, purposing to reach that village on the arrival of the mail, a design in which I was disappointed, that conveyance catching me up as I entered the beautiful pass of Killiecrankie, so famous for the signal defeat of King William's forces under McKay, by the Highlanders, that day commanded by the gallant but bloodthirsty Claverhouse.

To my delight I found the mail that morning quite free from passengers, although the day previous

it had been filled; so jumping up, it was not long before I found myself entering upon that desolate region which commences at Dalnacardock, and never loses its character altogether until within twenty miles of the northern capital. Although wild in the extreme, how many associations were connected with every mile we made! Here, by the side of the new road, as you approach Dalwhinnie, is plainly visible the military way made by General Wade, in the first George's time; there was the cairn erected by Charles Edward's wild Highlanders, when he camped at Dalwhinnie, he himself lying amidst his followers on the heather, with no other covering than his plaid. At the little inn at Dalwhinnie, is the room in which he held his council of war, to decide whether to follow Johnny Cope, the English general, who was one day's march in advance towards Inverness, or to strike a blow at Edinburgh, the plan which was at last decided on. The result is well known. Every inch of ground is historical from that spot to Culloden, four miles east of Inverness, where the star of the Young Pretender, which had shone so brightly from the moment that he unfurled his banner at Glenfinnan, set for ever.

It was near midnight when we reached Inverness,

but every comfort was to be found at the Royal Hotel, the landlord of which was about the most obliging of his class. So anxious was I to get on, that I ordered a conveyance to be ready for me by nine o'clock the following morning, to take me to Dingwall, the chief, although a poor-looking town of the county of Ross, where I intended taking another conveyance, which would take me to Strath——, the shooting quarters of Mr. W——, the gentleman I was about to join.

There is a melancholy incident associated with that little town of Dingwall, which perhaps will not be considered as out of place if here related.

I was partaking of a slight luncheon, whilst the drosky, which was to take me to Strath—— was being got ready; and having been promised that a sum of money should be placed to my account at the bank there, some days previous to my leaving London, I drew a cheque, which I desired my servant to get cashed. To my dismay, he returned with the information that no money had been paid to my account, and that my name was unknown to the bank. He, however, stated that Mr. McIvor, the manager, was desirous of seeing me. Excessively hurt at what I had done, I repaired immediately to the bank,

where to Mr. McIvor I made every apology, and by my letters proved that no blame whatever rested upon myself.

“Quite sufficient, Mr. Stretton,” said the banker. “Now, what money do you want?”

I mentioned the sum; that sum was instantly handed to me, Mr. McIvor merely asking me to give him an acknowledgment. Few bankers would have acted as did Mr. McIvor, whose treatment to a thorough stranger was never by me forgotten. Alas! he is no more! A few years back he asked some friends to dinner. Four, I believe, besides himself, were poisoned, the cook having mistaken some deadly root for horse-radish!

The drive to Strathgavon afforded me much pleasure; the country around Strathpeffer, a small Highland watering-place, being tolerably well cultivated, until Contin is reached, when again your eyes are greeted by the wildest scenery, which extends, with little variation, to the western coast.

At last the wretched village, if a few mud huts could be so called, was sighted, and my future residence pointed out to me. It is true that the “big house,” as my driver designated it, was larger than the majority of the wretched hovels that I was nearing, but that was

all, for it was greatly eclipsed in outward appearance by the little inn at which we stopped. Indeed, I was most agreeably surprised, on being ushered into a small but well-furnished parlour, to find such quarters near at hand.

I know not why such should be the case, but I have ever found the hotel proprietors of Scotland and Ireland infinitely in advance of their English brethren as regards civility. It may be that they make themselves more known to you—one thing is certain, that the lower order of innkeeper in Scotland is much better educated than any of the same class in our own country. It may be that the Scot is “canny;” for myself, I never found such to be the case. Clan-nish they are, and to be admired for it.

“Mr —— has been anxiously looking forward to your arrival, sir,” said Mr. Macfarlane, arranging the peat that was throwing out such warmth that I was fain to back my chair from the place where I had originally placed it. “Rather late in the season to come so far north, is it not, sir? But Mr. W—— can always find something to shoot. Cocks there are among the ‘birks’ in plenty, and roe are numerous. The muirfowl were very strong last season, and a good breeding stock left after all their murderous work.”

"So I have been informed," I replied. "The red deer are plentiful, are they not? Mr. W——, in his letters, stated how successful he had been. I forget how many royal heads he boasted of."

"Yes, sir, they are plentiful enough in Ducherry, but the forest is not on these shootings—the edge of it is the boundary. There might have been outlying ones, 'tis true, but here is Mr. W——."

Rising from my chair, I went to a window, feeling anxious to take stock of the man with whom I was about to live for many months.

If I was to say that I was not disappointed by the casual glance I had at Mr. ——, as, surrounded by half a dozen terriers of all imaginable breeds, he entered the inn, I should say that which was untrue.

In height he might have been five feet seven inches, with a frame singularly slight. His hair, which was light, fell in ringlets on his shoulders, and by no means added any beauty to a face exceedingly forbidding, which showed itself above a beard of seemingly patriarchal growth. Neither were his legs anything to boast of; for they resembled cabbage stalks. To crown all, the gentleman was attired in Highland costume.

“So that is Mr. W——?” I said, as I turned from the window, with the intention of asking one or two more questions of the landlord; but my words were thrown away, Mr. Macfarlane having quitted the room, evidently with the purpose of himself introducing my future companion.

For that introduction I had not long to wait, for almost immediately the door opened, and in walked the gentleman, accompanied by his dogs.

“We expected you yesterday,” said Mr. W——, throwing himself into an old arm-chair, which was placed in the corner of the room. “We waited dinner until seven o’clock—our usual hour is six. Had you not better come at once to the Lodge, and take possession of your apartments? I think you will find yourself comfortable. My wife has done her best to make you so.”

Expressing my thanks, I told him that I would accompany him at once, upon which he arose, opened the door, and descended the stairs, leaving me to follow him as best I could, an act attended with some difficulty, the dogs, in their excessive eagerness to accompany their master, nearly causing my downfall.

Five minutes’ walk brought us to the door of the residence of my new acquaintance, where we were

met by four little children, the most perfect stepping-stones imaginable; the two eldest, like their father, and whom they strongly resembled, dressed in kilts. Desirous that the little ones should form a favourable opinion of me, I stopped and chatted with them for a few minutes, an act of courtesy they appeared duly to appreciate. Satisfied that I had succeeded in making friends, I entered the house, and was soon in the presence of Mrs. W——.

If I had been taken aback at my first sight of the husband, I was equally so on my introduction to the wife, but in a far different way, Mrs. W—— being as good-looking as her husband was plain, and as elegant and ingratiating in manner as he was abrupt and forbidding.

Being now regularly installed in my new quarters, and having some time to spare ere dinner would be ready, I sauntered back to the inn to make the necessary arrangements for my servant's board and lodging, the smallness of the Lodge rendering it impossible that he could reside under the same roof with myself. No trouble did I find in striking a bargain with Macfarlane, and during the entire time that I remained at Strath——, my man made his home at the inn.

Although the outward appearance of my new residence was anything but prepossessing, the interior was as comfortable as mortal could wish; indeed, there was a degree of elegance about the arrangements that I was by no means prepared for, and before retiring for the night I began to form an idea that I should be very comfortable, and that my new acquaintance might turn out to be not so bad a fellow after all.

The dinner was excellent and well served; wine tolerable; whisky undeniably good; desiderata which, with the adjunct of a roaring peat fire, made the great meal of the day pass off admirably.

Yet was there something not altogether as it should be in the deportment of both master and mistress as regarded each other. Not that he was harsh or cold—but there was an amount of taciturnity that offended me; and it was too evident that Mrs. W—— entertained a degree of awe for her husband, which, in my opinion, bespoke but little happiness. Not that there was any want of love on the part of Mrs. W——, for during my residence at Strath—— I had ample opportunities of witnessing the extent of her affection for her husband.

Strange indeed was the change of manner dis-

played by my companion, when, his wife having quitted the room, we found ourselves alone. All that disagreeable reservedness of manner was immediately thrown aside, and the man whom I had brought myself to look upon as a boor, deficient in education, stood forth the scholar and the finished gentleman. For two hours after the departure of Mrs. W——, did we remain over our whisky toddy, in unceasing conversation. In those two hours I discovered how far and wide had been my friend's travels, how extensive was his knowledge of foreign languages; and before adjourning to the drawing-room, I had made up my mind to like my companion vastly.

“Are you then inclined, Mr. Stretton, to accompany us to-morrow morning?” said W——, drawing a chair in front of the fire; “it will be early work; we must breakfast at half-past four, for the distance is somewhat great, and our way to the desired spot anything but easy; added to which, we shall have no moon. That we shall have a shot or two is certain; and I trust that, as it will be your first attempt at stalking, you may be successful in bringing home a royal head. Had you visited Tate's shop whilst in Inverness, you would have seen two splendid

heads which that excellent tradesman is mounting for me."

In reply, I merely said that I should be delighted to join him in anything that he undertook in the sporting line, and that, being a novice as regarded deer-stalking, I threw myself entirely into his hands; concluding with the remark that so anxious had I been to get to Strath——, that I never once quitted the hotel until I entered the carriage which was to convey me to his house.

In the course of conversation that evening, I learned much regarding our neighbours. Sir George McKenzie of Coul, I was informed, was the great proprietor on one side, whilst on the other the forest of Ducherry was the boundary.

"We know but little of our neighbours, Mr. Stretton," said W——. "Very few callers. I do not think that five persons have called on us since I have had these shootings. When I say five persons, I mean what the world calls gentlefolks. Therefore your life, perhaps, will be here somewhat wearisome, coming from the south as you do, where, perhaps, you have been accustomed to much society. My wife, and the companionship of my little ones, is all that I ask for."

“And enough, too, if a man can really make himself happy in his own house, Mr. ——,” I replied, involuntarily casting a glimpse at his wife, who most imperturbably continued her crochet work, and in whose face I could not trace the slightest sign of feeling one way or the other. Her beautiful countenance displayed the most perfect void as regarded all thought, and she did not once lift her eyes from the work on which she was engaged.

“I presume your servant will not be above lending us a helping hand to-morrow morning—the more beaters the better. We must make a broad stretch of it. You must know, Mr. Stretton, that our work to-morrow is somewhat verging on poaching”—an avowal from which I inferred that our projected expedition was one not of a perfectly legitimate character.

“We are going to try the outskirts. This hard weather has driven them down. We are not particular in these parts; black game, grouse. Ay, all is fish that tumbles into our net.”

“’Tis true,” I said, “that I myself have never been over-particular as regarded the conventional laws of sporting, but I have ever been taught to believe that

by act of Parliament red game were safe after the tenth of December."

"The devil a bit with us, Mr. Stretton," rejoined my new acquaintance. "As I hinted before, we kill everything—the pot must boil. Two hundred and fifty a year rent, and bread and letters only three times a fortnight."

"What!" I exclaimed, interrupting him. "Bread and letters but three times a fortnight!"

"Ay, and enough, too, when I can have such oat-cake as our Christie makes, and be debarred from a dozen letters a day, each of an urgent character. This is the happiest spot in the world—excellent home-made bread, and a certainty of peace of mind for fourteen days out of the twenty-one. Perhaps you never were in difficulties, Mr. Stretton?" added Mr. W——, at the same time fixing his eyes upon me with a look so arch, so searching, that I winced under it; while his remark brought forth not only a smile, but a burst of laughter from his wife.

"Never in difficulties!" I exclaimed. "Why, Mr. W——, the world says that I have had as many writs as would paper a moderately-sized sitting-room."

"You are the boy for me!" interrupted my friend,

just as I was about to explain how I really did know what *difficulties* were, and how I was perfectly cognisant of the world's ill-nature. "Here you will live in clover. No thought—no care. Shoot, fish—fish, shoot, *ad libitum*. By-the-bye, we have capital fishing in the lochs about here. Have you ever tried the otter?"

"No," I replied, "but many a summer morning has found me on a brook's side in the Principality—Wales, I mean—and few men, perhaps, know more of the habits of that subtle animal than myself."

"You are a fisher, then?" said W——, giving me a most inquiring look.

"Time will prove that, Mr. W——, should I be so fortunate as to remain at your house. I am an old hand at salmon-fishing, and perhaps ere I leave the Blackwater and the Connon will attest that prowess which I feel proud in saying I attained in the waters of the Principality."

"I begin to think that we shall learn something from you, Mr. Stretton—I mean, as regards the gentle art."

"Perhaps you may ; and I have no doubt that I, ere I return to the West, will have acquired many a little poaching wrinkle, the knowledge of which, were it not

for my visit to the North, would have been denied me. You will find me an apt scholar, Mr. W——."

Whether Mrs. W—— was tired of listening to that which, to a lady's ears, would naturally be most uninteresting, I know not—but at this moment a few bars from the piano brought me to her side, and for some twenty minutes I remained at the instrument, listening to a very sweet although not powerful voice, as she sung some pretty ballads, which at once marked her as a descendant (as she was) of an old Jacobite family. Loyal as I myself am to the reigning dynasty, I cannot help entertaining an interest almost romantic in that unfortunate defunct royal race, from whose rule Providence was pleased to save us, but of whose troubles, in the person of the "Young Pretender," I shall hereafter speak, having closely followed that unfortunate prince's footsteps from where he first raised his standard at Glenfinnan, to Glencamger, where he took his last meal ere embarking on board the *Heureux*, when he bade adieu for ever to his beloved Highlands.

As was to be expected, having to breakfast at four o'clock the following morning, we retired early to rest; but so conflicting were the opinions I formed, or rather endeavoured to form, as to my new friend's

qualifications as a *confrère*, that it was long ere I closed my eyes.

Never was there a darker or colder morning than that of the — of December, as, quitting my really comfortable bedroom, I made my way to what we, *par excellence*, called the “withdrawing room.” There, before a tremendous peat fire, was laid out a breakfast that an alderman would have appreciated. Finnan haddocks, cold grouse, and preserves of different sorts, to say nothing of the spirit stand which occupied so large a space in the centre of the table, met one’s gaze.

The very way in which the haddocks were served up, in hot napkins, was enough to create an appetite; and no small addition was it to the comfortable feeling with which I sat down to eat that morning’s breakfast to find that Christie McTavish, the Highland girl that waited upon us, was one of the most obliging of her class, however masculine might be her proportions; and to the day of my departure, she proved the same attentive being.

“Are you ready, Stretton?” said W——, throwing some cigars on the table; “McKenzie and Donald, with some two or three others, are awaiting us; and

bring your plaid with you, for I tell you that you will feel the comfort of it ere morn dawns—an hour under Ben Wyvis at this time of year is no joke; but we shall have luck this morning, I think.”

Assuring my friend that I was perfectly ready, and lighting one of the cigars which he had kindly thrown upon the table, I followed him to the door, where we were met by McKenzie, the keeper, and the gillie, Donald, two as fine specimens of the real Highlander as could be imagined, between whom stood my unfortunate London servant, Henry D——, shewing by no means to advantage in a stable-jacket, whilst his quivering lip and shaking knees proved the little zest that that veritable cockney had for a morning’s poaching under the highest mountain of Ross-shire in the month of December.

“Stretton, surely you will not let that man of yours accompany us in that hat?” said W——. “Why, man,” addressing my servant, “we shall never get a shot. Go into the house, and ask one of the lassies to give you a bonnet.”

And away hurried my unhappy domestic, no doubt perfectly convinced that he had been made a victim to misplaced confidence, when he agreed to accom-

pany his master to the Highlands of Scotland in the winter.

“Now you look something like,” said my new-made acquaintance to Henry, as he rejoined us. The latter, I may remark, was in no way surpassed in height or in physical power by my friend W——. “You’ll do now. Come along, and keep your tongues quiet.”

At this we all moved forward, the snow at starting reaching considerably above our ankles ; a fact which strongly indicated that some trials were before me, ere I again reached the humble although very comfortable abode where I might now consider myself domiciled.

Passing through the two parks, a term invariably given in Scotland to inclosures of every kind—those in this case might have made one entire acre—we crossed the river Blackwater, a stream so close to my bedroom window, that I have frequently had my room inundated by it, and once avoided a fearful ducking in its waters only by escaping in a punt.

“Take care, Stretton, the rocks are fearfully slippery, and it is as dark as pitch,” said my friend, cautiously picking his way among the huge stones, around which the water rushed and splashed ; creating in the hearts of myself and servant no enviable sensations. “You are right now,” he

continued, as, with the assistance of Donald and McKenzie, I crept up the bank. "All plain sailing now, with the exception of a flounder or two among the Turberries. It is roughish work, and cold too. I fear we shall find the snow somewhat deep when we reach the higher ground."

Agreeing with him as to disagreeables enumerated, I solaced myself with the hope of its continuing dry overhead; but, in truth, to one who could not see a yard before him, from intense darkness, and the nature of the ground, the morning's walk was anything but one of pleasure.

However, all things must come to an end, and thus at the expiration of about two hours, the latter part of which had been passed in silence, we halted. It was still very dark, neither was there a sound to break the deathlike stillness of that December morning.

For a time all kept silent; when at last, in a whisper, W—— inquired of McKenzie whether he thought that the beaters were well instructed as to their movements. Being answered in the affirmative, he then began to give us ours, commencing with myself, whom he desired to lie down, and wait patiently for break of day, by which time the beaters

would be drawing towards us, and doubtless driving the anxiously looked for deer before them.

“Your plaid will keep you from the snow, Stretton. Many an hour have I waited upon that spot, to be at last rewarded with a shot. The forest is just at our backs. As for myself, I shall take up a position some fifty or sixty paces higher up. McKenzie again still further off.” Saying this, W—— moved away, accompanied by McKenzie, leaving the gillie with me.

For upwards of half an hour had I lain stretched upon my plaid, when the sound, as I thought, of voices made me raise my head. Oh! what were the sensations that I laboured under! Morning had broken, and at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards I could plainly discern two stags and three hinds steadily making their way towards us. On, on they came at a gentle pace, the noble monarchs of the wood ever and anon raising their stately heads, all wary, though unconscious of their impending fate. That moment will never be forgotten. I even dreaded lest the beating of my heart, which sounded audibly, should scare away the noble animals.

Drawing my bonnet over my eyes, I resumed my recumbent position, a slightly elevated piece of ground

keeping me perfectly concealed. Fearful lest the act of raising my head might debar me from a shot, I remained for another ten minutes, as nearly as I could guess, with my head buried in my plaid. At last, no longer able to restrain myself, I looked up. There before me stood, not thirty yards distant from where I lay, a noble stag. With head erect, displaying his ample proportions, he appeared as if defying all danger.

Raising my gun to my shoulder, still lying on my stomach, I fired, and the splendid animal, making at the moment one leap into the air, fell dead.

The delight I experienced was beyond description, and I longed to rush forward to gloat over my prize, and was only withheld from so doing by fear lest I might cause my friend to lose a shot.

Fortune, however, favoured us that day, for in less than a minute afterwards the sharp ring of a rifle told me that another was added to the score; and on looking towards the spot where my friend had taken up his position, I saw three hinds dash by, which, almost in the twinkling of an eye, were lost to view, having regained the forest.

Thoroughly aware that all chances of further sport were at an end, I rose and advanced to where lay

my noble prize, whose antlers at once bore testimony to the fact that I had been guilty of a deed that any thorough sportsman would have blushed at.

It was my first day at deerstalking, if that noble sport be not desecrated by the term applied, and I may be pardoned.

"A verra guid head, Mr. Stretton; but the velvet is strong upon him—it will ne'er do weel for stuffing. Mr. Tate, I ken, will find mickle fau't; he's unco canny, but a good man for a' that."

"I know what you mean, Donald," I replied. "You insinuate that the animal is out of season, or, as you call it, not in 'full grease.' But never mind, it is a stag, and the first that I ever shot. Perhaps, should I be here next September, I may, under your auspices, become a veritable stalker."

"Och! sir, for that you have only to go to Contin. Captain Ross is the cleverest chield in the North—many a stag have I seen him knock over at two hundred yards. A fine man and a guid man is the Captain! D'ye ken him, Mr. Stretton?"

"No, Donald; I have not the pleasure of that gentleman's acquaintance, but have heard much concerning him. He is well known in England as a thorough sportsman."

Here W ——, coming up to us, expressed himself as highly delighted at my success, but could not help contrasting strongly the work of his hands with that of mine; and, indeed, when I reached the spot where lay the magnificent animal that he had killed, I was fain to confess that he had beaten me.

“What a splendid animal,” I said, “that must have been a few months back! What a sin to kill him!”

“A sin!—what do you mean? Why, we have soup for a week. A grouse or two stewed down with deer’s flesh is no bad meal, I can tell you.”

“What! kill grouse now!” I replied.

“To be sure we do; did not I tell you that all was fish that came within my net? How could I ever make the place pay without that? You must drop all squeamish notions here, Mr. Stretton.”

Surprised and somewhat disgusted at the open manner in which he set all the conventional rules of sporting at defiance, and that in the hearing of his own servants, I ventured no reply, but inwardly determined to watch my partner ere I entered on any agreement that might bind me to him for a lengthened period.

“Strange man,” I said to myself, “but I will not rashly judge him.”

"I think we may find a roe or two in yonder planting," he said, pointing towards a tolerably large covert of birch and larch; "we will have Donald and Sandy to look after the deer, the boy with the pony will soon be here."

The beaters having all come up, we again moved on, when, for the first time, I remarked how numerous were the tracks of hares.

"You have plenty of hares about here," I said.

"Oh! yes," he replied, "plenty, but at this time of year they are only fit for soup—we frequently kill from forty to fifty a day."

"Why, then, you must indeed be well provided with semi-liquidity. I am fearful that it will be a case of *toujours soupe maigre*."

"No, no, not that altogether; we live well, Mr. Stretton, the late moonlight nights have sent us plenty of cocks. You ought to see my team of dogs; I shoot to terriers."

"The deuce you do!" I replied; "then, I should think, a pretty lot of riot you must have; don't they chase?"

"Oh! yes, a little; but they come back after a time; they are not altogether broken from running game. To-morrow you shall see them out. To-day

we will drive you coverts ; knock everything over—we have a few black game there—spare nothing.”

“ Strange mortal,” I said to myself ; “ if ever there was a pot hunter, you are the man.”

Turning my head in the direction where our home was situated, I could plainly see the boy and pony slowly ascending the hill. At this we all moved forward, the snow frequently considerably above our knees, and in momentary fear of receiving a serious fall, so broken was the nature of the ground.

On reaching within a hundred yards of the covert, W—— and myself, making a circuit, walked rapidly forward, in order to take up positions in an open space near the end of the wood. He had barely reached the desired spot, when the rattling of sticks against the trees betokened that the beaters had commenced their work.

“ Look out, Stretton !” said W——, “ there are roes on foot. Hark ! cock ! over your head.”

Looking up, I pulled, and the bird fell ; the next moment a roebuck dashed by me at the distance of some twenty yards, and received the contents of my other barrel—a right and left shot of which I was not a little proud. It will be remembered that

it was my first day in the North. The reader will therefore perhaps refrain from laughing at my excessive verdure.

As the beaters gradually neared us our diversion increased, the only drawback to my pleasure being the recollection that we were outraging every known principle of legitimate sporting, and that my friend, if I may so call W——, was shooting for the pot, and that alone. That a better shot never existed, I believe, and the number of head he killed was considerable, for not once did he miss his mark.

Upon our return to Strath——, which we did early that day, I was surprised on entering a large room, which he termed his larder, to see the quantity of game that was there collected. On lines from wall to wall might be seen partridges, snipe, red and black game; against the walls themselves hung a roebuck, and two haunches of exceedingly uninviting venison; whilst the floor of this extraordinary barn-like looking place was covered with feathers and blood, giving evidence of not having been cleansed for months.

It appeared that the chief object of our day's shooting was to make up a deficiency in the amount of game that was to be sent off on the morrow to Inver-

ness, from whence it was to be dispatched for sale to some place, the name of which has ever remained a mystery to me. But eventually I discovered that everything connected with my friend's establishment was a mystery.

The second evening passed off as had the previous one; the same taciturnity that had marked Mr. W——'s behaviour the day before, and which had so much annoyed me, was visible; the same oddity, almost amounting to fear, on the part of the wife, was perceptible; and before rejoining Mrs. W—— in the drawing-room, I had made up my mind that the master and mistress of Strath—— were the strangest couple I had ever met, and that my visit was not likely to be a protracted one.

That Mrs. W—— would now and then essay a remark, or address herself to me, is true, but then always with her eyes fixed upon her husband, who generally took care to have the lion's share of the fire, not appearing to care how far his better half was removed from the glowing peat, and who studiously avoided any little proffered attention on my part.

Thus, it will be readily believed that the two evenings passed on the banks of the Blackwater were dull

enough. It was with a pleasurable feeling, indeed, that I saw Mrs. W—— take her candle at the early hour of half-past nine, and retire for the night.

Left to ourselves, the conversation naturally turned upon the morrow's amusements, when it was arranged that we should beat some birch woods, distant about three miles, and situated at the western extremity of the Strath—— shootings. So totally different a man was W—— in the absence of his wife, that I actually could scarcely bring myself to believe, when in her presence, that he was one and the same man. When Mrs. W—— was in the room, I felt that I almost hated him; when she quitted it, so interesting would become his conversation, that I really liked the man. Then again the knowledge that I had gained of his poaching propensities did not raise him in my opinion; but the thought would come across me that I was as bad as he was. In truth, I felt bewildered; and the more I attempted to dissect the man, the more inscrutable did he appear in my eyes.

“Well,” I said to myself as I sat before the fire in my bedroom, “I will give him a fair trial. That there is some mystery attached to him, I will swear; and if I can unravel it I will. Why does he

treat his wife, a woman apparently formed to adorn any society, with such marked disrespect? Why does she evince such decided symptoms of fear? Is the man habitually jealous; or does he consider her as being far beneath himself as regards mental acquirements?"

Talking to myself in this strain, I began to think that I had made a sad mistake in taking up with the first man whose advertisement caught my eye, and almost wished myself back in the Principality; but second thoughts, which are frequently the best, urged my remaining where I was for a time, trusting to chance for a more suitable companion turning up. However, I was determined not to bind myself to W—— for a lengthened period.

Never was there a more promising morning for cock-shooting than that of the morrow; and it was with a considerable degree of interest that I looked forward to witnessing the working of my friend's terriers, of which he had an incredible number, and, as I have before stated, of all imaginable breeds. There you might see the pure Dandy Dinmont, the Skye and common Scotch, the veritable tinker's dog, and the sleek-coated English terrier, all living together in perfect harmony.

That they roamed about our queer establishment may be believed, for it was a sort of "Liberty Hall;" but there was a strange admixture of niggardliness about everything which W—— undertook, which was by no means in keeping with a recklessness that marked many of his actions. Oatmeal, which at that time might have been £14 a ton, was left entirely under the care of men whose wages were cut down so low that they could, if honest, have barely found a sufficiency of that national food for themselves and families.

Neither did the attire of McKenzie, the keeper, or that of Donald, the gilly, bespeak any liberality on the part of the master, for whom they appeared to entertain but little respect; for it was wretched in the extreme, and I was not long in discovering that to Mrs. W——, and to her alone, was to be attributed the goodly table that I sat down to the first two or three days of my sojourn at Strath——.

It was seldom that the mistress of the house appeared at the breakfast-table, and still less frequently did I see the children. Hear them I did, it is true, but what room they occupied was to me unknown for days; and that part of the house where W—— had his apartments, was never visited by me during my

entire stay. Nevertheless, I must confess that no children could be apparently better brought up.

My friend's dog-cart being ready to receive us, immediately after breakfast we started for the place of rendezvous, whither some hours previously McKenzie and Donald had gone, and where we found them surrounded by some ten or twelve terriers, who gave unmistakeable proofs of the love they bore their master, whatever might be the feelings entertained towards him by his fellow-men.

Not long did we linger at the wretched Highland bothy where we put the horse up, and where, despite its miserable appearance, Donald gave me to understand most excellent smuggled whisky was to be had—a hint I did not choose to take, being thoroughly aware that to each man, when shooting, an allowance of half a pint of that spirit was given; a quantity which I soon found out was but a mouthful to the two stalwart fellows who attended upon us. It is true, McKenzie, the keeper, honest fellow though I ever found him to be, was not to be classed in the same category with the general run of Scotch keepers, even of that day, for they were, and are, a very superior order of men for their station in life.

It took us but a few minutes to reach the spot

where it was intended we should commence operations ; and I had not long to wait, before I had an opportunity of witnessing the wonderful command that my friend's terriers were under—seldom ranging beyond thirty yards from us, and, in more than one instance, totally repudiating all idea of running game.

I have said that W—— was an excellent shot. That day he astonished me, and I knew not which to admire most, his unerring aim or his wonderful powers as a walker. Looking at his spindle shanks, one would have believed him incapable of almost any endurance ; that day proved the fallacy of that opinion, for I saw him mount spots which few would have dared to ascend.

However steep and rugged the ground, no alteration was there apparently in that man's breathing ; neither did cold, hunger, or thirst seem to affect him. What he might have been under an August sun I never had an opportunity of knowing, but I have been told that he could walk all day without drinking, and that perspiration was never seen upon his forehead. Verily that man was in good condition.

Our sport that day was excellent. The number of woodcocks flushed was incredible, and only equalled

(as far as I am concerned) by what I once saw at a place called Meavy, in Devonshire, where there were more birds on the wing than I could count; in both instances I had come upon a flight.

“ Shall I twist his head off ?” said Donald to me, holding in his hand a cock that I had just shot.

“ What on earth do you mean, man ?” I replied.

“ Twist his head off—are you mad ?”

“ Nae, nae, sir ; I’m not mad, but I’m thinking few of these, for your own eating, will you have ; they maun all gae awa’—we are making up for next week.”

“ What ! do you mean to say that your master sends everything away—sells every head of game ?”

“ All that they’ll take of him ; but deer and hares they don’t like—they say they don’t pay carriage.”

“ Well, Donald, your master must be a strange man—strange in more ways than one. I do not think I ever saw a better shot.”

“ Never was a better, sir. If you did but see him among the muir-fowl, och ! he would make you stare. We had a great show of birds this season, but they were mickle cut down ; and since the hard weather has set in, what are left have become verra wild.”

“ A good thing too, Donald,” I replied. “ I saw

to-day that they had packed ; your master will find it difficult to get at them now."

"Och ! he'll always find something to shoot. To-morrow, I suppose, we shall go hare shooting, unless he again beats these birds. But woodcocks, ye ken, are here one day and off another ; but master will find them in the heather, or somewhere else."

Want of light put, at last, an end to the best day's cock-shooting I ever had—the team of terriers having done their work in a manner which perfectly surprised me.

Sending one of the beaters for the dog-cart, W—— and myself slowly made our way towards home, where we were received by his wife with the same gentleness of manner, accompanied with the same timidity which had ever marked her behaviour. Week after week passed, with little variation as regarded our amusements, and the month of March had opened upon us, when we began to turn our thoughts towards piscatorial amusements, in which I found my friend as great an adept as he had proved himself with the gun, but more especially so when the use of illegal measures were resorted to in catching the finny tribe.

I shall never forget the first day that I saw the

“otter” used, than which a more deadly engine for killing fish cannot be imagined. A flat piece of board, a foot and a half in length, by three quarters of a foot in width, having the one end rounded like the bow of a boat, and leaded at the bottom, so as to cause it to swim uprightly, is the main thing. In this piece of wood are bored four holes, two about three inches from the bow, the other two holes being about four and a half inches from what may be called the stern. To each of those holes is attached a loop, and to these loops a line, from which, on swivels, hang from twenty-five to thirty droppers, those near the otter being the shortest (as in the case on the ordinary trout cast), the others gradually elongating as they near the large wooden reel the fisher (or poacher, perhaps, more properly speaking) holds in his hand. Now, it was no mean head that invented that murderous engine, for by the exact placing of the loops to which the line is attached, the “otter” may be sent out or drawn in at pleasure. Frequently have I seen as many as eight or ten fish on at a time.

The March and April of 1840 were unusually fine and mild months—more especially so for that northern part; and thus both trout and salmon were early in season, which proved a great comfort to me,

the commissariat at Strath—— having sadly fallen off since my first arrival. Nevertheless salmon after salmon which I had hoped to have seen upon our table found its way to Inverness, a thing which mightily disconcerted me, and with which I at last found fault. W——, whose taciturnity had increased rather than diminished, although we still kept very good friends, had not succeeded in attaching me to him, as I thought at first he would have done. No direct fault had I to find with him; he was amusing and talented; that he was of good birth was certain, and yet he never alluded to his family, or even the country that he came from. As far as the continent of Europe was concerned, he appeared to have travelled far and wide, speaking with fluency numerous languages. He was also remarkably well up in classics, judging from the frequent and apt quotations that he indulged in.

Five months had I been a sojourner at Strath——, when I received an invitation to dinner from the laird, as he was generally termed, Colonel ——, who resided in Inverness. Thither I went, and a more agreeable, hospitable, and intelligent old gentleman I never met, but that may be said of all the upper classes in the north.

Among the party I met at table that night was one that at first much interested me. He was a man somewhere about three or four and thirty, belonging to one of our Highland regiments, and, if my memory serves me, recruiting in that district. In the course of conversation that evening (I may as well here state that the everlasting whisky toddy had then taken the place of more expensive drinks), the name of my friend W—— was mentioned, at first in all kindness, when suddenly Captain Mc—— said, “You know, of course, that W—— is not married to Mrs. W——?”

“What! sir,” I exclaimed, “Mr. W—— *not* married to Mrs. W——; why, sir, let me tell you, although I cannot state with certainty who she was, that I know her to be a woman of family, and a perfect lady—I will go so far as to say that I believe her to be the daughter of a peer.”

“I know not who she may have been, Mr. Stretton,” interrupted Captain Mc——, “but I repeat that Mrs. W. is no wife of W——.”

Thunderstruck for a moment, I held my tongue, the astonishment of every one present being apparent on their countenances, and on none more than on that of Colonel ——, the landlord of my friend ——.

Never did I feel placed in a more painful position. To give the lie direct I was scarcely justified in doing, and yet it was incumbent on me to uphold the character of the man with whom I was living on terms of intimacy, if not of friendship.

At last I broke the painful silence. "Captain Mc——," I said, "can you substantiate that which you so openly have averred?"

"I repeat that Mr. W—— is not married to Mrs. ——; I do not deny that he is a married man." This he uttered in a tone and manner approaching almost to defiance.

"What!" exclaimed all, some in the room appearing to share with me the indignation that I felt at so uncalled for an assertion; a feeling which, for my friend's sake, I thought it best to suppress, at the same time forming a resolution as to my future conduct.

"I think, gentlemen," I said, "that the sooner the subject is dropped the better; but I candidly tell Captain Mc—— that I shall acquaint Mr. W——, on my return to Strath——, with the tenor of this conversation, painful as it indeed will be to me."

"You are at liberty so to do," replied the soldier.

A dead silence for a time succeeded the short and

somewhat angry table-talk I have just related, and which indeed put an end nearly to all conversation, every one appearing to be occupied with his own thoughts. I was rejoiced to find that it was the cause of a general movement, all seeming anxious to join the ladies.

That an otherwise very agreeable evening was, as far as I was concerned, marred, is true, for I longed, yet dreaded, to return home and tell W—— all that had been said, not for a moment doubting the facility with which he would give the lie to the slanderous attack upon his honour.

Uneasy and indeed sorrowful, for I had the highest respect for Mrs. W——, I took the first opportunity that presented itself of bidding the Colonel good night, and returning to the hotel.

Little did I sleep that night, so bewildered was I. To bring myself to believe that W—— was guilty of bigamy, I could not; that his wife was above all censure, I could have sworn. So conflicting were the thoughts that agitated me, that I almost began to waver in the resolution I had made, and to form the determination of saying nothing whatever about the matter, but of at once quitting Strath——.

Whilst sitting at breakfast the following morning,

the landlord of the hotel entered the room, and informed me that the harriers were about to meet some six miles from the town, on the road to Nairn ; offering me at the same time a mount, which, after listening to a long list of the excellencies belonging to the animal placed at my service, I accepted, another inducement being that Lord Lovat had kindly given a deer for that day's amusement.

Well, to the meet I went, believing that one day would make but little difference as regarded the misery I was about to cause two people, should I act up to my original idea of openly stating everything.

That our sport that day was wretched in the extreme, I must confess ; the deer proving an arrant craven, suffering himself to be pulled down in about fifteen minutes, and unfortunately at a place where we could not save him.

If sport I had none, I had the pleasure of meeting that day with a very gentlemanly and intelligent Highlander, who kindly volunteered to lionize me over the exact spot where was fought the celebrated battle of Drummossie Muir, *alias* Culloden, where the Young Pretender's last hopes were shattered. A better cicerone I could not have had ; there was not

a tumulus that was not pointed out to me. There stood the stone wall close to Culloden House, part of which the dragoons of Cumberland had pulled down to enable them to make that decisive charge which sent Charles Edward flying from the field. The very room is shown at Culloden House where the unfortunate young Prince sought an hour's sleep prior to the fight of the eventful 16th of April, 1746. Not a part of that wild moor that is not teeming with interest—an interest which eventually induced me to follow the footsteps of Charles Edward over a great part of Badenoch and Lochaber, where he was so long and so nobly concealed; but of those spots I shall have again to speak.

Although I had lost much time in wandering over the famed Drum Mossie, it was not sufficiently late, on my return to Inverness, to deter me from fulfilling my determination of starting for Strath——, my mind still wavering regarding the course I should pursue as concerned my friends.

Once across the Kessock Ferry, I was not long in completing the twenty-four miles, and by nine o'clock that evening I was again in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. W——. Never had I seen them, I thought, so happy; certainly never did he appear in

my eyes so amiable as he did that night, and I felt happy in their happiness.

“Am I,” I said to myself, “to be the one to render this woman unutterably miserable? I feel that I cannot do it, yet what is to be done? If not denied, his very silence will confirm the truth of Mc——’s statement. It must be told him, but I will not mar his rest to-night. To-morrow he shall know all.”

“You seem tired, Stretton,” W—— said; “it will be perhaps too much to ask you to relate your adventures. We did not expect you back until to-morrow. How fares the old Colonel, and all at Inverness?”

Denying that I was at all fatigued, I merely recounted the names of those I had met at dinner, with the exception of that of Mc——. I then stated my adventure with the old Highland gentleman, told him that McDonald, the landlord at the hotel, had given me a mount with the harriers, and finally questioned him as to what he had been doing in my absence.

“Nothing,” he replied; “I gave myself two days holidays, and have been the most domestic of men. I know not when I have had two idle days in succes-

sion before. Have I not been domestic, Julia?" addressing his wife.

"You have indeed, dear Alfred," replied Mrs. W——, her fine face lighting up in a manner that I had never witnessed before; "I only wish you would give yourself more of such holidays, for, happy as I am with my children, a husband's lengthened absence causes a vacuum which nothing can fill up. I hope you have passed a pleasant time at Inverness, Mr. Stretton?"

I thought the words would have choked me as I answered that I had, feeling at the same time more than ever how utterly impossible it was to moot the dread subject.

Left alone, for Mrs. W—— did not long remain with us, the old question was put to me, as to how we should amuse ourselves on the morrow, when it was decided that we should try the Blackwater, the river I have before alluded to as running close to the back of our domicile.

"The water is in right good order, Stretton; and McKenzie tells me that he saw two or three fish rise on returning from Contin. One, he says, he could swear to as being a fresh fish. Let us see what we can do with your Bittern's wing that you deem

so killing. Bittern's wing, orange body, blue tackle, and tailing of golden pheasant will be bright enough, I should think?"

"Too bright by half, W——. With the water as it is, you will find that a far darker fly will do the trick. Wings made from the tail feather of the turkey, undyed; dirty yellow body, with blue tackle and the tail from a jay's wing, is the fly that I shall try. How different are the flies that you use up here from those with which we are accustomed to kill our fish in Wales! Neither do I like the way in which you northern gentry work your rods. They would laugh at you in the Principality if you came your sink and draw system there. I have seen much of salmon fishing, and to my mind the Welshmen tops you all."

"I know to what you allude," replied W——, "for I remarked the other day the manner in which you worked your rod. You keep the point well up, whilst we invariably lower it. You give the rod much movement, whilst we work ours gently."

"That is not all," I said, interrupting him. "You throw directly across the stream, whereby your line, in nine times out of ten, comes over the fish before your fly, and then in a curve. We throw

obliquely ; and yet every inch of water is fished—taking care, of course, to commence sufficiently up stream.”

“ Upon my word, there’s some reason in what you say. Nevertheless, I’ll back myself for a crown against you on to-morrow’s work.”

“ Done with you, W——. You have put me on my mettle. With the gun I acknowledge you to be my superior ; with the rod, you have found your match.”

For some time did we continue in such friendly chat, the altered manner of my friend causing me almost to forget the dreaded task that I had undertaken ; and it was not until alone in my own room that the whole force of the dreadful report rushed back to my remembrance.

“ Yes,” I said to myself, “ to-morrow he shall know all, but not until night. I will not spoil his day’s fishing.”

There was one great redeeming quality in W——’s character, a quality which is seldom found in sportsmen—namely, a thorough absence of jealousy ; and thus on reaching the spot where we intended to commence operations, there was no cavilling as to choice of place—we were both at work within twenty minutes

after our arrival at the water side, W—— being some four or five hundred yards lower down the stream.

“Ye maun look out weel, Mr. Stretton,” said Donald, who accompanied me, whilst McKenzie attended upon my friend. “Your flee will come over him the next throw.”

“May be, Donald,” I replied; “but I have a fancy that I shall see him at the very tail of the pool—ay, just about yon curl,” pointing with my left hand towards a rock around which the water formed a most enticing eddy.

“He’ll gie ye something to do, sir, if ye hook him there.”

Making no reply, I continued throwing; not a foot of water being left unfished, and I was just about to entertain fears of the splendid pool proving a blank, when up came the fish. Whizz, whizz, whizz went my reel, as he drew the line rapidly through my fingers, skimming as he did for many yards on the surface of the water, and displaying his silvery sides to our delighted gaze.

“You maun hawd on him, sir; it’s a fearfu’ place below. Once below the rocks, you’ll be broken.”

“Hold your tongue, Donald,” I replied, “and suf-

fer me to kill my fish in my own way; it is not the first time that I have hooked a salmon!"

Having silenced the gilly, for to me nothing is more disagreeable than advice at such a moment, I began to work with a thorough determination of capturing the scaly beauty, which for upwards of twenty minutes fought most vigorously, at one time nearly running out all my line.

"Hold on him, sir!" again cried Donald, seeing the fish make a dash down stream, as if to gain the broken water near which he had been hooked, an attempt which proved to be his last, for, turning on his side, he suffered me to draw him to the shallow water, where he was easily gaffed.

"Number one, Donald," I said, as I extracted the fly from the mouth of the fish. "Your master and myself have a wager on this day's work. I had hoped it would have proved a heavier fish. It will not beat ten pounds. I wonder whether Mr. W—— will go by number or by weight?"

"By weight, ye may be sure, sir. Last year I saw him fish against another gentleman, and there was mickle bother about that, but then it was for truits. That's a bonnie fish, that, and right clean."

Putting the fish into the large creel hanging over

the gilly's shoulder, I slowly made my way down stream, carefully fishing every likely pool. For a considerable distance no success attended me, but at last my fly was taken under water, when, in fact, I was only clearing my line. For a moment I believed I was about to have another glorious struggle, but that hope was soon dispelled, the fish proving an easy prey, and fit for nothing—it was foul. Consigning the salmon again to its native element, I recommenced my labour of pleasure, slightly disconcerted, it is true, that my chance of winning the bet was perhaps lessened by my second fish having proved out of season.

“I see master has thrown this pool,” said Donald, pointing to some footmarks on the sandy soil which the last freshet had left behind.

“Ay, and to some purpose, too, Donald,” I replied. “He has killed a fish here, if I am not mistaken; had he not done so, you would not have seen such working backwards and forwards as I can trace upon that gravel. Your master will beat me yet, Donald, I fear. But never mind, the pool must hold another fish, and I will try it. It has had some little rest. Your master is over fond of belabouring a catch. We from Wales act differently; once a fly

has been made to show itself over every inch of likely water, and no rise obtained, we quit it. Salmon are like ourselves—not always in the humour.”

Commencing at the head of the pool, I fished the “catch” steadily down, the water, which had at first been rather thick, having now become a beautiful colour, resembling that of porter, that hue so much desired by all salmon fishers, and which is only to be found in streams that take their rise in mountain districts. Half the pool had I fished when a splendid salmon rose; one gentle movement of the wrist was sufficient to prove that I was again in holt, and an instant afterwards I had an opportunity of judging how great might be the weight, and what the condition of my antagonist. For half an hour did I fight that fish in a pool as free from rocks as one could wish, so perfect was his condition; and when I drew him gently up a shelving rock, in order that the gaff might do its work, my astonishment was great indeed at finding upwards of a yard of casting line hanging from its mouth.

That my friend W—— had been broken that morning, and on that very pool, I felt convinced, a mishap which I fondly hoped might finally ensure to me the triumph of the day.

“That’s my master’s flee; I ken it weel,” said Donald, holding up a great staring, gaudy imitation of a dragon-fly, a bait that in our western streams would have proved utterly useless. “He was unco fashed, I ken, when he lost that fish.”

“It is one of Tate’s make, Donald. I only wonder how it ever came to raise a fish. I would not give a shilling for a dozen such as that; but take care of it, we shall soon know all about it.”

Let not the reader, should he be unacquainted with the habits of the salmon tribe, believe that what I state is untrue; in more than two instances has the same thing occurred to me—one, of which I may be perhaps allowed to allude to, being remarkable, and in a great degree proving the oft-quoted assertion that the fish tribe are cold-blooded and destitute of feeling.

The case I allude to was as follows:

In the year 1837, whilst residing in the Principality, I chanced one day to be fishing on that part of the river Wye which separates the county of Radnor from that of Brecknock, and distant about ten miles from the town of Bailth. In the morning I had had fair sport, having killed one salmon and hooked another, and was about wending my way to the resi-

dence of my brother-in-law, where I was engaged to lunch. Having to pass by a well-known pool called Adams's, I thought to throw it, but being a very large and long pool, I hesitated for a while, fearful of being beyond my time at M—— Castle. At last I determined to throw it, and at the third cast succeeded in hooking a splendid fish of fifteen pounds weight, in whose eye was firmly fixed a hook, to which was attached the entire point of a salmon line.

Wonderfully astonished that a fish should rise again after such suffering, I made for the residence of my late brother-in-law, whom, with several others, I found at the luncheon table.

It happened that, as I entered the room, the subject of conversation turned upon salmon-fishing, when a noble lord, now no more, began bitterly to complain of having been that morning broken by a fine fish on Adams's catch.

Without saying a word I quitted the room, placed the fish on a large dish, the hook, with line attached, being still in the eye, and returned to my friends.

"Is that your fly, Lord H——?" I said, holding up the fish to him, and pointing to the fly.

"It is, by all that is miraculous!" he replied;

“you killed him of course on Adams’s catch. Who would have thought that he would have risen to another fly, and that so soon? Can there be any feeling in the finny tribe?”

But to my story. It was one o’clock when I killed my last fish, the hour named for partaking of our luncheon; and as the place where it was agreed that we should meet was but two or three hundred yards lower down the river, we made for it at once, and on reaching it I was pleased to find my friend already arrived.

“What have you done, Stretton?” said W——, rising from the ground as I came up.

“Killed two and hooked a third, which I threw back into the river,” I replied; “what may you have done?”

“Killed one about seven pounds weight, and broken by a splendid fish; he took me round a rock, and off he went.”

At this I desired Donald to shew the two fish that I had killed, at the same time handing him the fly and point that I had taken from the salmon’s mouth.

Great indeed was the astonishment of my friend W—— at receiving back his hook, and he did not fail to call me to account for denying the utility of a bright fly on a bright day.

Some agreeable bantering took place during lunch relative to the piscatory powers of one and the other, and so cheerful was W——, that, for the time, all disagreeables were obliterated from my remembrance.

After lunch fishing was resumed. W—— succeeded in hooking another foul salmon, whilst fortune appeared altogether to have deserted me, not one rise falling to my share.

However, my friend confessed to having been beaten; and being satisfied with a fair day's sport, we returned to Strath——, my kindly feelings towards W—— having wonderfully increased.

It was not until I came to dress for dinner that my thoughts again reverted to the painful duty that I had to perform. Implicitly believing in his innocence, I determined not to suffer the evening to pass without making him acquainted with all that I had heard, whatever might be the result.

If W—— had been more than usually companionable that day, that sociability I found increased on entering the drawing-room prior to the announcement of dinner. Neither was Mrs. W—— less conversable—a circumstance which rendered me, if anything, less capable of performing the task that lay before me. It

was, therefore, with a heavy heart that I offered her my arm to conduct her to the dining-room.

Never did I see so great a change in two people. W——, who was in high spirits, paid every attention to his wife; whilst, on the other hand, Mrs. W—— chatted and laughed—actually daring to call him to task for being beaten at salmon-fishing.

That he must have remarked an alteration in my manner, I was convinced; for do what I would I could not rally my spirits—indeed, I felt miserable.

As was usual with Mrs. W——, she left the dining-room early, an act which, if anything, rendered me still less inclined to be communicative.

Finding that I either gave no answer to his questions, or such as were irrelevant to the subject, W—— taxed me with being dull—a remark which gave me an opportunity at last of unburdening my breast of the dreaded secret.

“W——,” I said, “you tax me with being dull. I may be, but when you have listened to all that I have to say, you will allow, I have no doubt, that none other than a feeling of regard for Mrs. W—— and yourself has caused me to appear as this evening I have done. Listen to me, W——. At Colo-

nel ——'s table the other night was one whom I do not believe you even know by sight. His name is Mc——. He spoke of you——”

“Spoke of me !” exclaimed W—— ; “and pray what did he say about me ?”

“That which I am compelled to tell you, painful as it must prove to you. W——, that man dared openly to avow that you were not married to Mrs. W—— ; that——”

“What !” again exclaimed my friend.

“That Mrs. W—— was not your wife. He insinuated even more ; for he said that he did not deny your being a married man.”

“And what reply did you make, I beg to know ?”

“I denied his statement as far as I was able, and told him that I should make you acquainted with all that he had dared to say.”

“What further passed ?” inquired W——.

“He said that I was at liberty so to do.”

During this short but dreadfully painful conversation I never took my eyes off his. Anything more distressing than the working of that man's countenance I never beheld. At last, burying his face within his hands, he groaned audibly.

“W——,” I said, “what mean you ? Tell me

at once what it is that you intend to do. Not one day's delay will this business admit of. Think of your wife and children ; prove to the world at once how utterly false has been that man's assertion. What difficulty can there be in that ? Do not think that I wish to pry into your secrets—far from it. Only to-morrow morning give me your word that you will prove to Mc —— that he has been misinformed. I believe him to be too honourable to hesitate in retracting every word which he has uttered so detrimental to your fair fame, and, indeed, that of Mrs. W——. Should you wish it, I will accompany you.”

There was a dead silence of at least ten minutes. There sat poor W——, with his eyes fixed upon the glowing peat ; and to all appearance in a fearful state of mental agony. At last, rising from the table, he said,

“Stretton, I shall leave you for five minutes—pray do not move.”

He then quitted the room.

My first impulse was to follow him ; but finding that instead of leaving the house, he had joined his wife in the sitting-room, I quietly awaited his return.

The conversation that passed between husband

and wife must have been but short, for W—— was back again with me in less than the time specified.

“Stretton,” he said in a voice so broken that I could scarcely recognise it, whilst his face too plainly told the tortures of his mind, “we will not enter further on this subject. To-morrow I will do so. Say no more.”

“One question, W——, I must put to you,” I replied; “do you intend going to Inverness to-morrow—will you not at once nip in the bud this cursed scandal?”

“I will, and I thank you for your offer of accompanying me.”

“An unutterable load have you removed from my mind, W——; all will now, I know, be set at rest. To-morrow will see the last of this scandalous report.”

Reseating himself, he mixed a teeming tumbler of whisky-toddy, which he drank off, and so rapidly did he follow up his draughts that I was forced to warn him of the necessity of keeping a cool head for the business of the morrow.

It was late when we separated, each going to his own room.

That night was a sorrowful one to me; what to think I knew not, so conflicting were the ideas that

flitted across my mind. At one moment he was far from innocent in my eyes; at another he was a shamefully abused man. He had certainly not received the startling information as a man *sans peur et sans reproche* would have received it; but the blow was heavy, and perhaps his very agony had deprived him of the power of at once clearing himself. With the fervent hope that the morrow would clear up all my doubts, and place him above scandal, I endeavoured to court sleep, but it was long ere it came, and my night was one of troubled dreams and restlessness. It was later than usual when we found ourselves seated at the breakfast-table, and, as was generally the case, by ourselves. Little or no attempt being made by either at conversation, I was not sorry when the meal was over.

“Stretton,” said W——, offering me a cigar, “come towards the stable, I wish to speak to you.” He then quitted the room. If my friend had appeared haggard the previous evening, the night had certainly not conduced to the improvement of his looks; for in my life I never saw such a picture of misery. Lighting my cigar, as he had previously done, I followed him out of the house, and proceeded with him along a path which led from the stable for

some distance along the river side, a direction in which but little interruption might be expected.

“The river is, if anything, in better order to-day than it was yesterday,” I said, endeavouring to break a silence not only painful, but likely to be of some length.

“Yes,” replied W——, “it is; had we fished to-day, we should have had good sport.”

“Stretton,” he continued, stopping short in his walk, “I must speak out. Listen to me, I pray you, and ask no questions. Stretton, either you or I must quit Strath—— this very day; again, I say, do not question me. Stretton, we must part to-day.”

Thunderstruck for a time, I walked on in silence, W—— in no way showing any inclination to renew the conversation.

“W——,” I said, “I thoroughly understand you; my presence being painful to you, it is your wish that I should leave; I go, and to-day will rid you of my society. You tell me to ask no questions. I will not do so; my thoughts are my own; but before we part, let me implore of you, if one particle of love or respect animates your bosom towards your wife, to lose not an hour in starting for Inverness. All that now remains for me to do is to pack up my

few things, which, with my man and dogs, shall be immediately conveyed to that town, should McFarlane have his conveyance disengaged."

"Donald shall drive you and your servant. McFarlane's trap can take your dogs and necessities. I myself shall be in town to-morrow—to-day I *cannot* go." This was said with a marked emphasis on the word cannot.

"Guilty," I said to myself, as I turned back towards the house with the intention of immediately packing up. Meeting Christie, the Highland girl I have before alluded to, I desired her to send my servant to my room; and greatly was he astonished, although agreeably so, when I told him to prepare for instant departure, but first of all to secure the use of the landlord's trap. Henry was not long in obeying my orders, the prospect of leaving what he considered such a dreary country adding a considerable degree of quickness to his movements.

In one hour I was prepared to start, and was only deterred from doing so by W——'s absence from the house, his presence being absolutely necessary, for the settlement of some little monetary affairs in which I was the debtor.

At last he returned, and sought me in my room.

“We may never meet again, Stretton,” he said, a nervous motion of the lower lip showing how much he felt, “but I wish you every possible happiness.”

“Most heartily do I hope that you and Mrs. W—— may find the same. By-the-by, cannot I see her before I leave?”

“Certainly; I will go and tell her—she is in her own room; she is aware of your intended departure.”

“Intended,” I said to myself.

At this he left me, sauntering out in front of the house, whilst I made my way to the drawing-room in search of Mrs. W——.

I had not been many minutes alone when that lady entered. Her calm and placid though pale countenance satisfied me that she was totally ignorant of the reason for my sudden departure, a circumstance which was the cause of considerable perplexity to me.

“It is indeed with sorrow that I hear of your very sudden intention of leaving us,” she said, holding out her hand, which I immediately took within my own. “I sincerely hope that no differences have arisen between yourself and my husband. Oh! pray tell me if anything untoward has occurred. Alfred will tell me nothing, and is so odd. I know not what it

is that troubles him to-day—that he is worried, I know. For the last few days I have been so happy, oh! so happy in seeing him in such unusual spirits, and I have inwardly blessed you as the cause. And now, just when that change has taken place, you suddenly leave us.”

Assuring her that no misunderstanding had taken place betwixt her husband and myself, and of my regret at leaving Strath——, I stammered out some excuses, incoherent enough I have no doubt, about the news from home——(we had had letters that morning).

Whether she was satisfied or not, I cannot say, but at that moment her husband entered. He appeared in a great measure to have regained his composure.

“I do not wish, Stretton, to drive you away, but the conveyances are ready, and McFarlane is anxious to return to-night.”

I thought the remark savoured much of want of delicacy, and took it as a hint.

“God bless you, Mrs. W——,” I said, rising from my seat and extending my hand, “may every happiness attend you and all that belong to you! I can only wish you the same, W——,” I added, turning

round and addressing her husband, who appeared to be strangely occupied at the moment in playing with his eldest boy's hand.

Nothing now was left me to do but to kiss the little ones, who had all by this time found their way into the drawing-room. Then once more shaking both W—— and his wife by the hand, I quitted the room, jumped into the cart, and was driven away from Strath——, never again to return.

With my thoughts wholly occupied by the events of the morning, the time taken up in reaching Inverness appeared but short. I could not but feel that the circumstances attending my departure were scarcely compatible with the idea of W——'s innocence. It also occurred to me that perhaps W—— was not his right name. Why was there so much secrecy? I never could believe Mrs. W—— to have been in fault. That there was some great mystery is certain. The worst feature in the case was his departure from Strath—— shortly afterwards, and that without any attempt to disprove the scandalous report which affected so deeply not only his own character, but that of his elegant and amiable wife.

Arrived at my old quarters in the northern capital, I had ample time to dwell upon the strange occur-

rences of the first five months of my visit to the Highlands of Scotland. That I was much hurt in separating from my friend W——, is true; for, despite his oddity, I had really began to form a friendship for him, which I trusted might prove lasting, especially on finding how different was his conduct towards Mrs. W—— on my return to Strath——, after my short visit to Inverness—that visit so fraught with events.

I had had the good fortune to become acquainted, the evening I had passed under the hospitable roof of Colonel R——, with Doctor N——, a physician of high standing in the North, and one whose sociability and joyousness of manner had endeared him to all classes.

To that talented and gentlemanly man I was much indebted. It so happened that at that time my eyes became affected with a most distressing weakness, from which I had previously suffered, caused, as I had been informed, by my having waded so much in former years in following up my favourite sport, salmon-fishing.

Through the kindness of Dr. N—— I became known to many in the neighbourhood of Inverness, and it was by his direction that I eventually visited

so many scenes, not only exquisitely beautiful, but interesting on account of their historical associations.

I shall long remember the day when, after a week's confinement to the house, Dr. N—— called, and asked me to walk out with him, saying that no harm could happen to me whilst I was with my doctor. Delighted at being again let loose, I told him that I was anxious to go to the shop of Mr. Tate, the celebrated fishing-tackle manufacturer, whither we both shortly afterwards bent our steps.

For some time we amused ourselves by looking over the varied collection of that obliging tradesman ; for varied indeed it was, embracing, as it did, everything connected with field-sports. I had made some little purchases, and was about to quit the shop at the instigation of the doctor, who warned me that luncheon would be ready by the time we reached his house, when two singularly tall and handsome men, splendidly dressed in the Highland garb, entered the shop. That a vast deal of respect was paid by Mr. Tate to these two gentlemen is certain, and I candidly own to having been myself very much struck by the appearance of the two strangers, although an attempt at effect was discernible in their every action.

There was one thing in particular that struck me, and that was the degree of deference with which the one brother addressed the other—for nobody could doubt for a moment that they were united by a fraternal tie—and the easy manner in which the elder of the two appeared to receive the attentions of the younger. That they were two very *distingué*-looking men nobody could deny, and I was anxious to get away, that I might question my friend as to the strangers in whom I was so much interested.

“They are two very remarkable men,” said Dr. N——, in answer to my inquiry respecting them, “and are believed by many to be the lineal descendants of Cardinal York, the brother of Prince Charles Edward, or of the Young Pretender, as you Southerners are wont to call that gallant but unfortunate young man; but whether such is really the case, I cannot say, I only know that Lord L—— pays them very great attention, and that they keep up a sort of petty state, on a small income, at a pretty spot not far from here.”

Telling my friend how singularly interested I was in everything connected with the risings of 1715 and 1745, I asked him his real opinion, at the same time stating my disbelief in the possibility of their

lineal descent—Charles Edward leaving behind, as is well known, no legitimate offspring, whilst his brother, Cardinal York, is allowed to have been the last of the Stuarts.

“Well,” he said in reply, “it makes but little difference. Let them enjoy their state; they have never done harm to any one; they are fine-looking fellows, as you must allow, and I have no doubt that the year 1840 will prove less stormy than that of 1745, and that our young Queen need have no fears as to a rising taking place in favour of either one or the other of the two gentlemen we have left behind. But as you purpose wandering among our mountains for a few weeks, I will sketch out a sort of plan by which you will be guided, and which will take you among scenes visited by Prince Charlie himself, and to haunts resorted to in the days of his skulking. I need not tell you that those hide-and-seek days were passed amidst the grandest and wildest scenes of which our country can boast.”

Thanking Dr. N—— for his kind intentions, I continued to question him, and before I quitted his roof that night I was tolerably well informed as to the localities I was about to visit, and the routes

necessary to be taken in my pedestrian tour.

Having passed a very agreeable three weeks in the capital of the Highlands, I at last started in a south-westerly direction, but without taking the boat, as I was advised to do, and steaming down the Caledonian Canal. With what interest did I, the evening of our first day's walk, reach Moy Hall, the seat of the laird of McIntosh—distant some seventeen miles from Inverness—where the young Chevalier would have been surprised, two months or more previous to the battle of Culloden, but for the watchfulness of the laird's mother, who at that time resided at the Highland capital. The story, as I had it from the mouth of more than one, is highly interesting, and is as follows :

The laird of McIntosh had declared for George the Second, and was with the Royal army, whilst his wife, who was residing at Moy Hall, had raised the clan for the Prince. In February, Charles and his attendants were received by the lady with much hospitality, the Chevalier intending to remain in that neighbourhood until his men should come up, before going nearer to Inverness, where Lord Loudon had a large Royalist force.

By some means the Earl gained information that the Chevalier was suspected of being a guest of the noble mistress of Moy, and he determined to attempt

his capture. Late in the evening, and with the greatest secrecy, he led his men, fifteen hundred it is said, out of Inverness. The secret, however, had not been well kept, for the Dowager Lady McIntosh had despatched a messenger to warn her daughter. This messenger, a mere boy, endeavoured to pass through the army on the road, but, finding it difficult, and fearing to be arrested, he laid himself down in a ditch by the wayside until all had passed, and then started off by a circuitous road towards Moy.

About five in the morning, half fainting from want of food, and nearly breathless with haste, he reached the house, bearing the astounding intelligence that the Earl of Loudon with his forces was but a mile distant.

The Prince, on being awaked, dressed himself, and came down to the courtyard, where he was joined by Lady McIntosh, with little more on than her night dress. Immediately exerting herself to get the Chevalier and his attendants delivered from the danger by which they were threatened, she eventually succeeded in getting them sent to a place of safety, by the side of Loch Moy.

Meanwhile Lord Loudon's forces met with a very strange interruption. Lady McIntosh had the previous night sent a patrolling party of five or six men, armed

with muskets, who were instructed to guard the road towards Inverness. The head of this party appears to have been a very clever fellow, and is said to have been a blacksmith, who, when he became aware of the approach of a large body of troops, at once comprehended their design. Planting his men at intervals along the roadside, he fired his piece at the head of the approaching body, and by the shot killed the Laird of McLeod's piper. The other men also fired, in such a way as to produce the impression that there was a wide-spread body of them. The smith was then heard calling on the Camerons and McDonalds to advance on the rascals who wanted to take their prince from them. The leading columns of the advancing troops immediately fell into a panic, and turning back with great precipitation, threw the whole force into confusion, oversetting and trampling down many in their efforts to escape, and ultimately returning to Inverness in a state of extreme distress from exhaustion and mortification of mind. Of course information of the blacksmith's success soon reached the ears of Prince Charles, and he at once returned to the Hall. How changed were the poor young man's fortunes two months subsequently !

Our next day's journey brought us to another in-

teresting spot, the ruins of Ruthven Castle—situated near to the poor little town of Kingussie—where, after his defeat at Culloden, Charles Edward gave orders that his army should rendezvous.

I had nearly omitted stating that at Inverness I formed an acquaintance with a man who had excellent shootings and salmon fishing in the immediate neighbourhood of Kingussie, and who, on leaving the Highland capital, kindly asked me to spend a few days with him; the river Spey at that time swarming with fish, as I was informed.

It was getting dark when, after leaving the little town, we crossed the bridge which spans the beautiful river, and which is as celebrated for its historical events as it is for the numberless dances it gives its name to. It was not too dark, however, for me to observe the excellent order that its waters were in. “Yes,” I said to myself, “I shall have a good day to-morrow.”

It was quite dark when I reached the quarters of my friend, where, although unexpected, no day having been fixed for my visit, I was most cordially received. He, however, had other visitors with him.

D——, who had passed some years in India, and who, judging from the establishment he kept up, appeared to be a man of very good means, was diametri-

cally opposed, in every essential, to the gentleman that I had lately quitted in so summary a manner. Liberal to a fault, he made his men too much his equals, and I certainly was rather astonished to find keeper and gillies, of whom he seemed to have an excess as regarded numbers, all "hobbing and nobbing" at the same table with himself and friends. Although the shootings were of far greater extent, and rented at double the price paid for Strath——, the lodge was inferior, as were all the necessary outbuildings. All those little elegancies, too, which were to be found at Strath—— were wanting at D——'s residence; but these were of little weight in his opinion, as he was there for sport, and legitimate sport alone. If the one was a pot-hunter, the other, from all that I gathered from his men, was the most liberal of mortals.

I may be considered as guilty of digression, but I cannot refrain from stating how different I found that spot, where I spent a week of such unalloyed pleasure, seventeen years later, when I again visited it. It was then in the occupation of Colonel M. Martin, and a new house had been erected, with suitable buildings adjoining, the former beautifully furnished. What had been D——'s residence, at the former period, had become one of the dog kennels.

It was late, verging on twelve o'clock at noon the following day, when we arrived at the river-side, and found the Spey in the most perfect order. What we might have done, our party consisting of three rods, it is impossible to say; but unfortunately one of my friend's visitors was that evening leaving by the Highland mail, and, out of compliment to him, the day's sport was brought very early to a close. Despite a meridian sun, however, one bright enough to blind any of the finny tribe, in less than a quarter of an hour each man had hooked his fish; as we soon learned, the three rods being within sight of one another, and sufficiently near to hold a desultory conversation. Five fish in all, three of which were of good size, were killed.

But why should I dwell upon each day's amusement?—one so like unto another. In the five days' fishing there was not one in which each of us did not kill a brace of salmon—on the best day seven being killed, all weighty fish.

I know not wherefore such should be the case, but I have had better sport in the Welsh rivers than I ever had in those of the north of Scotland. It may be that my knowledge of the streams in the Principality has assisted me, but certainly never did

man throw line on more likely water than is to be found in the Findhorn, the Connon, the Spey, or the Tay. The last-named river never afforded me a real good day's sport, and will ever be by me considered as inferior to the Garry.

The time fixed by myself for my departure having arrived, I bade farewell to D——, whose unbounded hospitality I had enjoyed for the space of six days. Half an hour afterwards I was entering upon that wild district which remains with little variation the same, until it opens upon the Blair of Athole.

That night we slept at Dalwhinnie Inn, situated in the parish of Laggan, and said to be the highest in Scotland. Anything more dreary can scarcely well be imagined, and decidedly nothing grander or wilder can be found than the scenery on the banks of Loch Ericht, a lake of great length, rendered gloomy in the extreme from the stupendous mountains which rise precipitously on each side. Here, indeed, I was treading historical ground. As I have before said, it was near the little Inn of Dalwhinnie that Charles Edward passed the night the day after General Cope had marched past on his way to Inverness, preferring to share with his troops their night's rest on the open heather to the comforts of a bed.

The distance from the inn to the head of the loch is not a mile. Little did the gallant adventurer, when flushed with hope after a little partial success a few days after the unfurling of his banner, think that the lofty Ben Alder, which for miles frowns over those gloomy waters on its western shore, would afterwards be his hiding-place from foes eager for his capture.

Having made a point of trying every spot that appeared likely to afford sport, I took the boat belonging to the landlord of the inn, and, accompanied by his man and my own servant, fished the loch for some miles down. My sport, however, was not good, the fish being shy, and those that we did catch only an average weight. That there must be fish of larger growth I then felt certain. The flavour of those that we caught that day was excellent. However, seventeen years later I had a better opportunity of testing the merits of that wild lake.

The third morning after my arrival at Dalwhinnie I was *en route* for Fort William, and in two hours' time my eyes rested again on the beautiful waters of the Spey. On the opposite side of that noble river was plainly to be seen the comfortable residence of Cluny, the chief of the clan McPherson; a man deservedly beloved by all who know him. On his

property, and well worthy a visit, is the cave in which his ancestors so long remained *perdu* whilst skulking during those fearful times subsequent to the battle of Culloden. But I cannot do better than give the following description taken from Donald McPherson's narrative MS., in Chambers's work on the history of the rebellion :

“ This cave or cage, as Cluny called it, was really a curiosity, and can scarcely be described to perfection. It was situated in the face of a very high, rough, rocky mountain called Letternillick, which is still a part of Ben Alder, full of great stones and crevices, and some scattered wood interspersed. The habitation in the face of that mountain was within a small, thick bush of wood. There were first some rows of trees laid down in order to level a floor for the habitation ; and as the place was steep, this raised the lower side to an equal height with the other, and these trees, in the way of joists or planks, were entirely well levelled with earth and gravel. There were betwixt the trees, growing naturally on their own roots, some stakes fixed in the earth, which with the trees were interwoven with ropes made of heath and birch twig all to the top of the cage, it being of a round or rather oval shape, and the whole thatched

and covered over with fog. This whole fabric hung, as it were, by a large tree, which reclined from the one end, all along the roof, to the other, and which gave it the name of the cage. And by chance there happened to be two stones at a small distance from [each] other, next the precipice, resembling the pillars of a bosom chimney, and here was the fire placed. The smoke had its vent out there, all along a very stony part of the rock, which and the smoke were so much of the same colour that no one could distinguish the one from the other on the clearest day. The cage was only large enough to contain from six to seven persons, four of which were frequently employed in playing cards, one idly looking on, one baking, and another firing bread and cooking."

Such was the place in which the gallant chief of the McPhersons received his beloved prince whilst hiding in Ben Aulder of Badenoch; certainly one of the roughest and wildest parts of the Highlands, and therefore but little apt to be intruded upon, although the high road from Perth to Inverness passes at the distance of a few miles. The country about here is totally destitute of wood, but that deficiency is amply made up by the rockiness of its hills and glens. How well do I also remember Corrineuir, at the foot

of great Ben Aulder, where Charles Edward passed his first night on arriving in Badenoch, and Tullochcroom, too, on Loch Laggan's side, where he received an old coat, a shirt, and a pair of shoes.

But I get on too fast for my narrative. A short walk of about four miles brought me to a small but tolerably comfortable inn, situated on the side of Loch Laggan, and immediately opposite to Ardverekie House, for some time occupied by Her Majesty and the late Prince Albert, and I believe the first Highland quarters taken by that lamented prince. The property belongs to the chief of the McPhersons; but was, on my second visit to it, some eight years back, in the hands of Lord H. Bentinck, who had taken a lease of it.

The house is large, and perhaps sufficiently comfortable even for royalty; but how Her Majesty could have amused herself during her sojourn, except on the lake, which, by-the-by, nearly washes the walls, I never could make out.

How many happy hours have I passed upon that long and narrow but beautiful piece of water!—how many creels filled with trout, varying from two pounds to a quarter of a pound, have I brought to that little Highland inn on a May evening!

Yes, I was happy by Loch Laggan's side ; and if retirement be the one thing sought, it is to be had on the shores of that lake. I have been there not only under a burning July sun, but when the snows of December have literally confined me to the house, all egress being impossible.

It was with a feeling of regret that I quitted the little inn on Loch Laggan side, where I had passed nearly a week of unalloyed happiness ; for the weather had been beautiful, and my sport good. Following the road leading direct to Fort William, in two hours' time I arrived at a little village, if the few shielings or bothies dispersed here and there at unequal distances could be so denominated. Nevertheless I found that it boasted of a tolerable inn, which I was inclined to pass without visiting, but was strenuously urged to the contrary by my servant, who most determinedly insisted that no other house of entertainment was to be met with before we reached Fort William. The name of the spot I forget ; I can only remember it was something Bridge.

That something more than usual enlivened the few inhabitants of that solitary district I at once saw, for bagpipes were puffing—and the people were dancing reels and Strathspeys. Neither was there any want of

creature comforts. The entertainment, I learned, was in honour of a marriage which had been celebrated that day. For two hours I remained among the well-behaved, happy party. The Southerner, as they called me, was not looked upon as an interloper, for I had the honour of being introduced to the happy couple who had been made one. The bride was a pretty woman of about eight-and-twenty, whilst the groom was a stalwart Highlander, whose years might have reached forty. I remember that I was much taken with the clergyman who had that day officiated. He belonged to the "Free Kirk," and from his lips I learnt, for the first time, the real difference between the Church of Scotland and the large body that had separated from it at "the Disruption."

Leaving our friends in the midst of their festivities, we recommenced our walk, every inch of which was momentarily becoming more and more interesting, from historical recollections. There, in the distance, I could see the time-worn old castle of Inverlochy; and there, spread out before me, was the little plain where the gallant Montrose so signally defeated the proud Marquis of Argyle, in the latter years of the first Charles's reign. There was the loch on which the haughty Lord President, too great a craven to

take his share in that hot engagement, preferred witnessing from his galley, in which he sailed away, the total discomfiture of his forces. Every yard I made was bringing me towards the spot where the young and adventurous chevalier, whose device, "*Tandem Triumphans*," was destined never to be realized, first planted his standard. How many stirring associations are there connected with that wild spot! That day Ben Nevis stood forth in all its grandeur—not a cloud was there; and I gazed upon the glassy waters of Loch Lochy and Loch Oich. I thought I had never seen anything more lovely. Again I say let those, my own countrymen, who would travel in quest of the picturesque, first search out the beauties that are to be found so near at home.

It was evening when we entered the little straggling town of Fort William, where a rather imposing-looking hotel invited our entrance. The house, which is one of long standing, possesses one room of exceedingly good dimensions, into which I was ushered.

Having refreshed myself with such an improvised bath as I could arrange, and changed my clothes, I descended to my sitting-room, to partake of what I expected to be a good dinner, having given an unlimited order. The only thing, however, that was

worthy of praise was the punctuality with which it was placed on the table. For the first object that greeted my longing eyes was a "haggis," my abomination, flanked by a fowl which had evidently died of the pip. Ringing the bell, I desired the waiter to take all away, and to bring me some fish, if they chanced to have any in the house.

At this the man stared, stating that they were celebrated for their "haggis," and assuring me, at the same time, that the fowl had not died a natural death. So equivocal was the reply, that I did not condescend to answer it.

Desiring him to bring me a couple of salmon steaks, I sauntered out to while away the time, but with a temper somewhat ruffled, for I was exceedingly hungry. However, I was glad that my servant was not so fastidious, and that he could give a good account both of the "haggis" and of the other untempting dish.

My short walk was one indeed of pleasure, for then it was that I first obtained an uninterrupted view of Scotland's highest mountain, which is 4,370 feet above the level of the sea, its summit perpetually covered with snow.

This reminds me, although I am again, I fear, guilty of digression, that there is a strange tenure

attached to Ben Wyvis, the mountain under which Strath—— is situated, and where I was staying with my friend W——. It is this: The Munroes of Foulis hold their estate by the production of a wain-load of snow, *whenever called for* by the reigning sovereign. Now, had our gracious Queen demanded that in the year 1834 the estate might have been forfeited, none of those frozen flakes being discoverable on that lofty mountain.

On returning to the inn, I was pleased to find that the same punctuality was observed that had so much pleased me on my arrival; and however uninviting might have been the viands that were first placed before me, ample amends were made by the excellence of the salmon steaks—indeed, so well were they served up, with a few pickled capers, that I made my dinner off them.

On my first arrival, I believed myself to be the only inmate, with the exception of those belonging to the house, and, therefore, was not sorry when I saw the door open, and a jolly-looking, and, to all appearance, gentlemanly man enter the room.

The waiter, who appeared to know the new comer, and was rather assiduous in his attentions to him, gave me a most expressive look, as the stranger in a

kindly tone asked what the house could afford to give him for his dinner ; a question that brought upon my countenance a smile, which was by no means lessened when amongst other delicacies the waiter mentioned the odious “ haggis.”

“ Haggis !—haggis !” replied the new guest. “ Oh ! yes, haggis will do ; and some salmon, you know—and, waiter, as soon as you can, if you please, for I’m very hungry—and thirsty too.”

The attendant, who really was a very obliging fellow, having assured the gentleman that in a quarter of an hour the dinner should be on the table, begged to know what he would take to drink.

“ Bring a bottle of Scotch ale immediately,” answered the stout gentleman. “ I’m thirsty—mind, Edinburgh ale.”

At this the waiter quitted the room ; and so rapid were his movements, that he had reached half-way down the stairs, when he was recalled by the stranger.

“ Waiter,” he said, in a tone of voice marked with a good deal of hesitation, “ you may as well bring a bottle of port ; this gentleman will, I have no doubt, oblige me by joining with me in discussing it.”

Thanking him, I consented to do so ; for the truth

is, I was desirous of knowing a little more of a man who was evidently a character. The waiter fairly off, I entered into conversation, and soon found out that my new associate was a commercial man, and that he travelled for a large London firm.

“I should have been here earlier, were it not that I stopped at High Bridge, half-way between here and Laggan,” he said, in answer to my inquiry as to which road he had come. “They were so happy and so jolly, that I could not leave them. I tripped it myself—ay, and as light as any of them. I have had the honour, sir, I can assure you, of dancing with a new-made bride to-day.”

Telling him that I had had, I fancied, the pleasure of being introduced to that lady, and of drinking a dram to her health, and to that of her husband, I questioned him as to how long he intended staying in the neighbourhood of Fort William. To which he replied by saying that he should remain but one day, as he intended making his way as fast as business would allow him to Inverness, but avoiding Dalwhinnie.

“I should say that you were perfectly right in avoiding, if possible, such a dreary district; why, I should hardly think that you would get an order,

after quitting this place, until you reached the Highland capital."

"Tut, tut, tut! My dear sir," he replied, "you don't know the country as well as I do, or the people. I tell you that these Scotch lairds like their wine, and can drink plenty of it; and, as a body, are better judges than our countrymen. Whatever Scotch house of any pretensions you go to, you may be sure to find a good glass of wine; but it is in ports that they are most choice. Why, sir, I serve nearly every laird from here to Cape Wrath. East or west, too, I am equally at home—everyone is glad to meet with Silas Thompson," putting his hand into his pocket, and drawing out his case, from which he extracted a card. "Yes, sir, my name is Silas Thompson," handing the card to me; "Silas Thompson, at your service, twenty-eight years and upwards representative of that highly respectable and long-established firm, Messrs. — and —, of Mark Lane, City."

The waiter entering at that moment for the purpose of laying the cloth, preparatory to my new acquaintance's dinner, he ceased speaking; and I, thinking that he would perhaps enjoy the meal with greater gusto in my absence, was about to quit the room, an act which he strenuously opposed.

“Pray, sir, do not leave me. I can assure you that I shall enjoy my dinner far more in your presence than in your absence. And you must remember that you have promised to join me in a bottle of port. Waiter,” turning to the attendant, “you may as well bring a bottle of your best sherry. Golden, mind, neither pale nor brown. I know you have it here. Pray be seated,” turning round and again addressing me.

Suffering myself to be persuaded, and wishing to know a little more of my strange friend, I sat down and listened patiently until the conclusion of a long panegyric on the firm he represented.

“You were talking of the different Highland families, Mr. Thompson. I presume Cluny is well-known to you? He appears to be a man much beloved about these parts?”

“Know him, sir?—ay, I know him well. Shall see him to-morrow, too, I trust; but I have to be at Belle V——, near Kingussie, before night. Do you believe in McPherson being the translator of Ossian’s poems?”

“Certainly I do, Mr. Thompson; and if I mistake not it was the brother of the ladies of Belle V——

that so beautifully rendered them into our language—the column erected to his memory perpetuates that.”

“Then I candidly tell you that I do not.”

“Surely, Mr. Thompson, you will not repeat that assertion before the ladies you are about to visit?—the Misses McPherson would be indignant to a degree. If there is anything in this world of which they are proud it is their knowledge—belief, if you will so have it—of their brother’s being the translator of those most remarkable poems.”

“Sir, I am no fool. What I say to you is in confidence. I know on which side my bread is buttered ; but you will allow that there exists a difference of opinion as regards the authorship?”

“I do ; but when no other name has been mentioned, and we remember McPherson’s wonderful proficiency in the Gaelic language, we may well grant him the palm.”

“Yet you must allow me to entertain my own opinion ; but this is a dry subject, Mr.—I do not know your name.”

“Stretton,” I replied.

“Well, Mr. Stretton, you do not help yourself,” he said, pushing the decanter towards me, for I had drawn my chair near to the table at which he was seated.

Filling up a glass of sherry, I remarked that I did not expect to find so good a glass of wine at an inn in so wild a district.

“That is real sherry, sir, and dry. Give me ‘vino seco,’” drinking off a glassful, and filling it again. “Sherry, sir, is undoubtedly the first of Spanish wines.”

“And I presume the Amontillado takes the first class,” I said, interrupting him.

“No, sir, it does not. The *Vino de Pasto*, a wine only to be met with at the tables of the Spanish nobility, ranks first, and the finest quality is five times superior in value to wines of ordinary quality.”

Here my friend swallowed another glass, without taking it from his lips.

“But, after all,” he continued, “port wine is what I prefer—‘the black strap of English celebrity,’ as a clever writer chooses to call it. I candidly own that I would not give a rush for a glass of pure port. If one was to listen to the author of ‘*A Word or Two upon Port Wine*, as it is made for our Market,” one would turn from it in disgust. But all that I say is, ‘If ignorance is bliss, it would be folly for port-wine drinkers to increase their wisdom at the sacrifice of their confidence.’”

The bottle of sherry was fast decreasing under the frequent attacks made upon it; but the quantity disposed of by my commercial acquaintance did not seem at all destructive to his appetite, as the amount of "haggis" that he had swallowed, preceded by a thick cut of salmon, fully attested. Bread and cheese followed, which he washed down his voracious throat with the remainder of the Scotch ale.

Upon the waiter asking Mr. Thompson if he would take anything in the shape of dessert (which, by-the-by, simply consisted of some very poor apples and a few biscuits), he said "Yes."

No sooner had the cloth been removed, and clean glasses placed upon the table, than, again pushing the decanter over to me, he begged me to help myself.

"You will find that a glass of good port, Mr. Stretton, and 'sec,'" filling his own glass, and raising it to his lips, which he smacked. "I have been in Portugal, sir, and indeed in most of the wine-growing countries."

"In France, without doubt?" I replied.

"Everywhere—*partout*."

"You appear to have been a great traveller, Mr. Thompson?"

"Yes, I have travelled through France and Italy,

Spain and Portugal ; but the wines of Germany are equally well known to me. But ‘vive la Champagne!’ say I.”

Here my jolly new-made acquaintance, in a voice singularly pleasing, sang forth the following:

“ When fortune frowns, and friends forsake,
And faith in love is dead ;
When man has nothing left to stake,
To hope, nor yet to dread ;
One God-like pleasure doth remain,
Worth all the joys he’s lost—
The glorious vintage of Champagne,
From silver goblets tossed.”

“ Bravo ! bravo ! Mr. Thompson !” I exclaimed.
“ You have indeed a very sweet voice.”

“ I don’t know much about my voice, but I know plenty of songs.”

Here he again struck up a stanza of another song.

“ When rectors drank port wine,
We parsons knew no strife,
We kept a middle line,
And led an easy life.
No parties vexed the Church,
And every sound divine
Could roost upon his perch,
When rectors drank port wine.”

I believe, had I not interrupted him by saying that if such had really been the case, and if Sectarianism

and Puseyism had been avoided, I should have rejoiced in the clergy quaffing, as of yore, their beloved port.

It was very evident, however, that the wine was beginning to take some slight effect—but not a disagreeable one—upon the still gentlemanly bagman, for he talked unceasingly, and kept me in a roar of laughter.

“I’ll tell you a capital story,” he continued. “It is a true one, although I read it in a book. You know the villainous compounds that cheap ports are made of?”

“I do not know exactly what they are, but have heard much about them,” I replied.

“Well, they are just as deleterious as the purchased British-made wines, and many of those made by our English housewives. Now, of your home-made stuff, there is green and ripe gooseberry, ditto currant, elderberry, quince, sloe, Orleans plum, blackberry, strawberry, cowslip, beetroot, parsnip, ay, and turnip; but the most extraordinary is the following. I tell you that I read about it in a book. An old lady, a friend of the author of the work, prided herself much upon the manufacture of these wines, confessing, however, that she never tasted them herself, as they disagreed with her. She was proud of making experi-

ments upon new materials, and was in the habit of asking the opinion of the gentleman alluded to upon the results.

“ It happened, one day, when he called upon his venerable acquaintance, that some of these unfortunate wines were, with the usual intended hospitality, placed upon the table, and his attention was particularly directed to a dark inky-looking liquid, which he was informed was a new discovery. He was prudently satisfied with its appearance and smell, for decomposition had evidently been going on at a rapid rate in the dark fluid ; but a friend who accompanied him, being too polite to decline, imbibed a portion of the liquid, and but for the assistance of a medical man immediately after he quitted the house, would probably have died from the effect of the poison. He was asked what he supposed the wine was made from. He pleaded ignorance, though, perhaps, he said, it might be mushrooms. The old lady, however, informed him that it was *real hock*, for she had made it *from her own holly-hocks*.”

I was nearly suffocated with laughter ; but that was only one of the twenty tales he told me. The bottle of port wine, like the sherry, was rapidly becoming less, and I began to be fearful—for it was

still early—that my friend would perhaps urge me to join him in another; so I determined upon putting a stop to it by saying, when he next asked me to fill my glass, that I preferred a little whiskey and water, which I might imbibe at my leisure.

At last the bottle was done, and Mr. Thompson, whose naturally rubicund countenance had assumed a bluish tinge, rose to ring the bell, saying,

“I think we can manage another—this wine will never hurt you. I can——”

Rising from my chair, I begged him to excuse me, at the same time stating that I invariably wound up the evening with a glass of whiskey and water.

“Ay, I believe you are right. We’ll have some whiskey,” he replied, ringing the bell with greater force than was absolutely necessary. “The whiskey I have no doubt will be good, but the wines I could answer for. Bring some whiskey, and, mind, *not that which has paid the duty*, if you have it.”

Upon the waiter assuring him that none other than that of the Aldoury distillery was in the house, he said,

“I prefer Glenlivet to that.”

“Why, you seem as great a judge of spirits as of wine, Mr. Thompson,” I remarked, reseating myself.

“I believe I am ; and when in Ireland, invariably look out for ‘potheen.’ Have you ever been in Ireland ?”

I nodded assent.

In a few minutes the spirit-stand was upon the table, and I commenced making a tumbler of punch.

“You will spoil good spirit, Mr. Stretton. I thought you took toddy.”

Saying this, he half filled, to my astonishment, a tumbler with neat whiskey, to which he added a slight modicum of cold water.

“Ay, you were right—you were right, Mr. Stretton. This will keep all our nerves quiet. Have you travelled much ?”

This was said with an air of superiority, as if conscious that he surpassed me in the extent of his ramblings.

“Yes, I believe I may say I have. I have been much in France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Holland. I resided also some years in Belgium,” I replied, with an assumed air of self-satisfaction.

“Oh ! you have been in Italy, have you ?—what think you of their wines ?”

“Why, tolerably good.”

“Tolerably good !” exclaimed my now slightly inebriated friend—“tolerably good !”

“ Yes ; I liked the *Vino d’Asti*.”

“ *Vino Nasty*,” he replied, raising his voice.
 “ Have you never drunk *Muscatel* at *Montefiascone*?
 You have been to *Rome*, I suppose ?”

“ Yes,” I replied ; “ I was there for some months,
 and slept one night at *Montefiascone*.”

“ Why, the wine is so good at that place, that an
 old bishop (not one of ours, I am glad to say) drank
 himself to death there. And at *Sienna*, in *Tuscany*—
 have you been to *Sienna* ?”

Again I nodded assent.

“ Well, at *Sienna* there is an epitaph—I think it is
 in the Church of the Holy Ghost—which displays a
Bacchanalian’s ruling passion. Yes, I regret to say—”
 here Mr. Thompson shook his head—“ his ruling pas-
 sion. It is this :

‘ *Potatores,*

Vina dabant vitam, mortem mihi vina dedere ;

Sobrius Auroram cernere non potui.

Ossa merum sitium vino consperge sepulchrum,

Et calice epoto—care viator, abi—

Valete, potatores.’

‘ ’Twas rosy wine, that juice divine,

My life and joys extended ;

But death, alas ! has drained my glass,

And all my pleasures ended.’

But there’s a lot more. The translation into

English verse is not mine, I must tell you. Did you ever read the 'Wine Drinkers' Manual?' "

"Never," I replied. "But, tell me, Mr. Thompson, you appear to be well up in the classics, where were you brought up?"

"Where was I dragged up, you mean? Why, at Eton. Yes, you may stare, I had two years at Eton, and don't mind telling you that I didn't like it. They snubbed me more or less—at least, so I fancied. It wasn't—no, it wasn't that I was in any way baser born than the most of them; for I must tell you that my father, sir, was not like me, as you will, in speaking of me hereafter, perhaps term me, a 'Bagman'—my father was a gentleman of means. He failed, poor man, and I, nothing loth, was removed from that aristocratic establishment."

"I feel for you, Thompson," I said.

"Well, Stretton, I will tell you candidly that I believe that the reason I was snubbed was, that I bore the abominable name of Silas. That name has caused me more bloody noses than I can count. But let me tell you that most of my antagonists found their match in me—yes, in poor Silas Thompson, at your service now."

"Surely you don't want to fight with me, Thomp-

son?" I said, laughing outright. "You quite mistake me. I was going——"

"Fight you, dear Stretton—why," here a hiccup, or something approaching one, warned me that my friend had had nearly enough, "I said that I was at your service, and I meant—I meant—that I would do anything for you; and to prove it, I will drive you anywhere you want to go—you haven't a trap with you, have you? I have a nice one, and as good a horse, too, as you ever sat behind."

"A thousand thanks for your kind offer," I replied; "but the fact is, I am taking a pedestrian tour—I and my servant jog along, Irish tandem-like, one foot before the other. Having nothing better to do, I am beating up the nooks and corners in which the Young Pretender so long concealed himself from the vigilance of his enemies."

"I am no way unwilling, Stretton, if you will accept me as a cicerone, to lionize you through many parts near at hand; twenty miles will take us to Glenfinnan. Yes, among these mountains he was indeed well cared for. I know every nook and corner."

Strange man, I thought.

A few minutes of silence, and again he broke out,

his voice in no way lacking any of its innate sweetness from the effect of his potations—

“ ‘ On hills that are by right his ain,
He seems a lonely stranger ;
On ilka hand he’s pressed by want,
On ilka side by danger.
Yestreen I met him in a glen,
My heart near bursted fairly,
For sadly changed indeed was he—
Oh ! waes me for Prince Charlie ! ”

“ I suppose you know that old Jacobite song, Stretton ?—pretty, isn’t it ? ” (Hiccup.)

“ No, not that one exactly ; but I have heard many during my stay in the Highlands, and much like the old Jacobite music.”

Here my friend decidedly gave proof positive that bed was the place best suited to him, and I determined to induce him, if possible, to retire ; an object in which, after some little friendly altercation, I succeeded ; but only after a promise, on my part, that the offer he had made of driving me anywhere I listed might be duly considered.

Ringing the bell, I ordered chamber-candlesticks, which a female almost immediately brought up. On her appearance he shook my hand heartily, and quitted the room, singing :

“Cope sent a letter from Dunbar,
Saying, ‘Charlie, meet me if you daur,
And I’ll learn you the art of war,
Right early in the morning.’”

“Strange being !” I said to myself, as, lying at full length on the sofa, I suffered my thoughts to dwell upon the extraordinary character with whom I had passed the evening. I reflected upon the reverses that had so early fallen upon him ; and was amused at the idea that a name should have been the cause of so much uneasiness to him whilst at a public school. That he was naturally clever, I felt certain, and was almost sorry, however profitable might be his employment, that the line he had chosen, or that chance had thrown in his way, was that of wine and spirits.

There was no doubt that he loved what he sold, and, had he not possessed a frame of iron, his self-indulgence must have hurried him to an early grave. To think that for twenty-eight years, perhaps, he had led the same sort of life ! It was incredible ; and yet his appetite appeared to be uninjured. In age he could not have been less than fifty, and must once have been handsome ; indeed, he was then a fine made man.

For some time I lay upon the sofa, but at last

drowsiness coming over me, I, too, retired to my room.

Before I was out of bed the following morning I could hear the voice of my friend Thompson, as he made his way to my sitting-room. He was singing one of those Jacobite songs that I had frequently heard when at Strath—— :

“Far over yon hills of the heather so green,
And down by the Corrie that sings to the sea,
The lovely young Flora sat sighing her lane,
The dew on her plaid, and the tear in her e’e.
She looked at a boat with the breezes that swung,
Away on the wave like a bird of the main,
And aye as it lessened, she sighed and she sung—
Fareweel to the lad I shall ne’er see again.
Fareweel to my hero, the gallant and good,
Fareweel to the lad I shall ne’er see again.”

Jumping out of bed, I lost no time in dressing myself; but before my toilet was finished, I had received an invitation from my friend to join him at the breakfast-table. Nothing loth, I accepted the proposal, and soon afterwards entered the room in which we had passed the previous evening.

I certainly was not prepared, on his offering me his

hand, to see Mr. Thompson looking as if he had in no way exceeded over night; for not one trace did he bear about his countenance to indicate that he had taken more than a very moderate allowance; indeed all the blue tints had vanished altogether. Neither was there any of that dulness about him which is frequently the sequel to excess. Jolly as ever, at one time he would sing snatches of songs Anacreontic; and at another warble some Jacobite strains, of which he appeared to know a prodigious number.

That his offer to drive me anywhere I wished was not a post-prandial one was soon proved; for he at once broached the subject, and most urgently pressed me to accept his offer.

He was kind enough to say that he liked my society, and that he would not suffer himself to believe that my refusal was caused by a feeling, on my part, of superiority of position in society.

I then candidly told him that had I been alone, and was assured that injury to his business would not accrue from the delay caused by his kindness, I would gladly have availed himself of his offer, more especially as he appeared to know every spot worth visiting, and every person that was notable.

“Do you make your journey eastward or westward on leaving Inverness?” I asked, whilst seated at the breakfast-table.

“Westward in the first instance. I have business at Gairloch.”

“Then you will go by Dingwall and Contin. Do you know Strath——?”

“Oh, well! I was once shooting a few miles further west, at Auchnanault.”

“The deuce you were! I have shot there—it joined my friend’s shootings. Strath—— was the place. As you appear to know everyone, was Mr. W—— an acquaintance of yours?”

“No, he was not; but I have heard something of him. They tell me that he is a man of excellent family, and was in orders.”

“You do not say so!” I replied; the increased mystery attached to my friend W—— causing me to be silent for a second or two.

“They do say,” he continued, “that——but so many untruths are told, that perhaps I had best hold my tongue.”

“What?”

“That he is not married to his lady. Pray do not quote me as an authority for the report, for, indeed,

I know nothing ; but I have heard that he has, or had, two wives living at the same time."

"I have heard the same, and do not believe it ; at least, I will not allow myself to believe it. His wife is innocent, I will swear, and I believe him to be, with all his oddity of manner, too good to be guilty of such an act. Let us, however, change the subject. Have you ever been down Loch Maree?"

He nodded assent.

"For I have reason to know that beautiful lake well. On that loch I was grossly insulted. I may say that I believe my life was in danger, had I not had my gun with me. I was returning from Poolewe, where I had been duck-shooting. The men were all drunk, and endeavoured to frighten me out of double the amount that they bargained for. There were four of them. I had but my man with me. I remember it was off the island nearly opposite Letterewe. I think that was the name of the place."

"I am astonished to hear what you say, Stretton, for I have ever found the inhabitants, wild as they are about these parts, most civil. The toddy did it, depend upon it."

"That reminds me that I was near getting into another scrape whilst living up in those parts. It

was this: I had been induced by some smugglers to purchase some whisky, which was duly being brought down early in the morning on a horse's back; when, as ill-luck would have it, the 'cutter men' came upon them. Nothing, poor fellows, was left for them to do but to stave in the cask, which they did; thus saving themselves, and most likely your humble servant too."

Breakfast being over, Thompson again renewed his entreaties to be allowed to drive me part of the way on my intended route, a request which I pertinaciously refused. So, at last dropping the subject, he asked me to accompany him to the stables, to see his horse. I certainly was in no way prepared, on entering the horse-box which my friend had managed to secure, to see so useful, and, indeed, handsome an animal; the good treatment he received being quite apparent, despite the long and heavy journeys he almost daily performed. The animal did not exceed fifteen hands.

"Any age," I said, looking into his mouth.

"You are right," he replied; "he's fifteen years old, at least."

"Well, then, he's a wonder—like his master."

"Right again," replied the bagman with a smile.

After due inspection of his old favourite, he drew my attention to his trap, which, to my astonishment, was a four-wheeled one. Upon expressing my surprise at the unnecessary weight he put behind the animal, he said with a comical look,

“I sometimes take a drop too much—if he falls, it is his own fault; but my neck remains uninjured.”

The inspection of his turn-out, which, by-the-by, was all good, being ended, we returned to the house, where each began to make preparations for his departure. On entering the room after about ten minutes' absence—for the few articles I carried on my back were soon stowed away—I found my friend, Mr. Thompson, for the moment engaged in settling his bill. Judging from externals, I should say that liberality was strongly implanted in his nature, delight or regret at his departure, for I really could not say which, being visible on the face of the waiter.

“Well, sir, the time is come that we must part—I regret it, and can only say that I hope we may meet again.”

“I indorse that wish with all my heart,” I replied.

“If that is really the case, allow me, Mr. Stretton, whilst shaking you by the hand, to say, God bless

you ! And let me ask of you a favour—not one which there is any difficulty in granting—it is simply to give a thought, a kindly one, now and again, to the Bagman you met at Fort William.”

What could I say but promise to do as he requested ?—and am I not fulfilling his wishes now ?

The promise was given ; I accompanied Mr. Thompson to his carriage, and watched him to the bottom of the street, where a turn in the road concealed him from all further observation.

It is very strange, but I really felt a degree of loneliness as I re-entered the sitting-room. There was a something about Thompson that was certainly irresistible ; whether it was his excellent temper or his convivial qualities, I know not—I only know that I liked the man. I may as well add that we never met again.

About half-past eleven, accompanied by my man, each with his pack on his back, I commenced my journey, determining, if possible, to make Glenfinnan before night. Now, although the distance did not exceed twenty miles, it was about as rough and difficult a walk as I had ever had ; the character of the scenery partaking of the sublime the entire way. It was half-past seven o'clock ere we reached the

little river which gives its name to the Glen, so historical in the eyes of all Highlanders. Nothing could be more romantic. The lofty and craggy mountains which on both sides surrounded the narrow valley, apparently ready to fall over and fill up the glen, were frightfully grand, rendered more so perhaps by the deathlike stillness of all around.

At last the desired spot was reached. In the centre of that little vale rose an eminence. Mounting that rising ground, I stood upon the spot where the young Chevalier first unfurled his standard, that flag which hurled defiance at great England's King.

THE WELSH PARSON.

THE WELSH PARSON.

IT was in the year eighteen hundred and forty, whilst residing in one of the wildest, and at the same time most beautiful counties of South Wales, that I became acquainted with the original whose character and appearance I purpose to portray, or at least to endeavour to do so. In my time I have travelled much ; indeed, I may say both far and widely, for not only is the Continent of Europe well known to me, but I have resided for some years at the Antipodes, and it may readily be believed that many and varied are the characters that I have stumbled against in my wanderings.

The hero of this, my little story, was no other than the incumbent of the parish in which I had located myself ; a man *sui generis*—the most delightful specimen of eccentricity that chance ever threw in my way. The parish that owned the Reverend Pugh Williams as its pastor was large, yet singularly devoid of inhabitants. Indeed the house that I rented was the

only gentleman's domicile in the district, all the others being the abodes of farmers or of cotters. The very incumbent himself (the living was a perpetual curacy) was a non-resident, living in the adjoining parish. In truth Llan—— was a primitive spot, and primitive were its inhabitants.

Mr. Pugh Williams, whose outward appearance I will now describe, was a man whose weight exceeded twenty-two stone. His face, which was perfectly oval, was the colour of parchment. Not a vestige of whisker ever grew upon his yellow cheeks. His stomach, which appeared to commence at his chin, was enormous, and his legs were in keeping with the rest of his huge body. His height did not exceed five feet eight inches, yet withal he was a wonderfully active man. Between this divine and myself a great intimacy had sprung up, and there were few who had more opportunities of discovering the many good qualities that really existed in his character than I had. To crown all, Mr. Pugh Williams was a perfect gentleman.

My friend, I must beg the reader to understand, was a man who might be considered as being tolerably well to do in the world, living on his own property, which consisted of a farm of some one

hundred and forty acres. His establishment consisted of only two aged domestics, one male and one female. The former did not sleep in the house, but merely had the care of the old strawberry-coloured mare (the only quadruped, with the exception of a cat, kept by the parson), and of the very small garden attached to the curious old building in which he resided, a sort of "bye-tack" belonging to the homestead, where dwelt his younger brother, who was his tenant, who farmed the land, and who, indeed, was as great a character in his way as the proprietor, with this exception, that the one had graduated at Oxford, whilst the other was totally uneducated, and as bad a farmer as could be met with. Now the elder brother, although he would hector over "Sammy" (as he invariably called him), was very kind, and, indeed, lenient to a fault as regarded his rent. It may be surmised, therefore, that our pastor was generally more or less in difficulties, and it was as much as poor old Margaret (or Marget, as he called his housekeeper) could do to make the two ends meet, as regarded the current expenses.

A few words will suffice to place the old domestic before the eyes of the reader. She was a little, thin,

withered-looking creature, about sixty-five years of age, with a singularly discordant voice, and a countenance seldom, if ever, lighted up by a smile; but her honesty was proverbial, and her attachment to the Master beyond belief. Now old Margaret unfortunately disliked me much, why or wherefore I know not, but I am certain that she never suffered her heart to soften towards me, despite my endeavours to gain her goodwill. There was one, however, who dreaded Margaret even more than myself—and that was Sammy.

The distance from my residence to that of Mr. Pugh Williams was about two and a half miles, of singularly wild mountain scenery; and the road, or rather sheep-track—for it was no better—wound round a hill so steep and rugged, that one false footstep would inevitably have hurled both horse and rider to the bottom of a dark and gloomy dingle, where flowed one of the numerous and beautiful tributaries of the far-famed ——; yet this dangerous and circuitous path would my friend canter over, regardless of danger, at all hours of the night, and in all weathers; but well did our pastor know his mare, and well did that mare know her rider.

I had nearly forgotten to state that Mr. Williams was a pluralist; for he held the perpetual curacy of

the adjoining parish, the duties of which were also performed by that gentleman, but they were by no means arduous, as there was but one service a day at each church, and that on alternate mornings and evenings. The distance from the one place of worship to the other was three miles.

I shall never forget the first Sunday that I attended the morning service at Llan——. It was bitterly cold. The church, which was situated on the summit of a high hill, was large, and as unpretending in its interior as in its exterior decorations. It was, however, but seldom that the congregation assembled within those walls exceeded thirty souls.

The first object which attracted my attention, the morning in question, was a long hop-pole, placed in a most menacing position in the clerk's seat, which was situated immediately under the reading-desk, in the centre of the aisle; but it was not long that I was kept in doubt as to the use of that most formidable-looking weapon, for, to my astonishment, I found that nearly every one who entered the building came attended by a sheep-cur, or dog of some kind, which animals would occasionally get up a fight, or something very like one, much to the annoyance of the more attentive part of the congregation.

I had not taken my seat many minutes when Mr. Pugh Williams entered the sacred edifice. Not a minute did it take to throw over his capacious shoulders the by no means very "fair white" surplice. Then ascending the reading-desk, he knelt in prayer, which done, he sat down, and after searching sundry pockets, produced a small comb, with which he commenced arranging his very thin and flaxen-coloured hair. This little off-hand toilet completed, the beautiful service appointed for the morning was begun. He had proceeded as far as the latter part of the absolution, when, to my astonishment, he suddenly stopped, and addressing a lady who had just entered, begged her to vacate the pew in which she had ensconced herself for one that adjoined the reading-desk, at the same time assuring her that the latter was far less damp, and altogether more comfortable. The lady—who, by-the-by, was tolerably good-looking, and a widow—did as requested, and that most solemn part of the service in which he had so abruptly stopped was brought to a conclusion. Great indeed was my astonishment at the want of decorum evinced by my friend; but to the generality of the congregation his conduct appeared as nothing extraordinary.

The prayers were nearly finished, and I had begun to congratulate myself upon the good behaviour of the numerous curs, who up to that time had only kept unceasingly trotting up and down the aisle, sniffing occasionally at the doors, in search of their masters, or standing upon their hind-legs, with their paws upon the sides of the pews, grinning into the faces of the occupants with the most unmistakable signs of recognition, when suddenly a tall, gaunt man, in a white smock-frock, entered, followed by a singularly ill-favoured brute. The whole pack immediately flew at the new-comer. Oh! such a row was there! Whack! whack! whack! went the hop-pole, indiscriminately dealt upon the backs of the yelping animals, as they rushed madly past the reading-desk; and most energetically was that weapon wielded by the somewhat stalwart old man who officiated as clerk.

My earnest gaze was, as may be expected, instantly riveted on Mr. Pugh Williams, anxious to discover how he brooked such a disgraceful interruption; and if my astonishment was great at the scene I had witnessed, it was increased when I saw that gentleman quietly seat himself, and calmly retain the position he had assumed until the last dog was driven from the

church porch. Not a muscle in his face betrayed either anger or astonishment ; nor did he address a single word either to his clerk or to any member of his congregation. It was in fact a weekly occurrence.

Order being at last restored, and the church doors closed, my friend re-commenced the service, which was soon brought to a close. Nothing further struck me as extraordinary that day, except that the Litany was altogether left out, a short prayer of his own composition, which he considered (he assured me) "far prettier," being substituted in its stead. This he did, I discovered eventually, that he might give his congregation the benefit of a long extemporaneous sermon. That day Mr. Williams lunched at my house ; and it was arranged that he was to do so on each alternate Sunday.

Month after month passed away, and our acquaintance had ripened into a sincere friendship. It certainly struck me at first as singular, with the knowledge I had of our pastor's liberality, that he had never asked me to his house ; but this apparent inhospitality I one day accidentally discovered was owing to the over-officiousness of old Margaret. But of this I shall have to speak hereafter.

I have before stated that the neighbourhood in which I resided was singularly beautiful; but I have omitted mentioning that one of Cambria's noblest streams ran close by the grounds of my abode—a river as attractive for its salmon and its trout as for the exquisite scenery of its banks—and endeared to me by many associations, by none more than by the remembrance of the many happy hours spent on its banks in the society of my friend the parson.

It was the month of June, and the long-continued drought had well-nigh put a complete stop to fly-fishing, when, as it chanced, some friends who were enthusiastic followers of old Isaac, came to visit me. Anxious to afford them some little sport, I made arrangements for a pic-nic to a mountain lake abounding with pike and large perch, distant about five miles from my residence, and two from the “eyrie” of Mr. Pugh Williams.

Now, the parson was an excellent companion, and as we necessarily passed his windows to reach the lake, I was determined to have him of the party. I must here confess that the desire of enjoying my friend's society was not the only motive that prompted me to invite him. Although I knew that the feeling was

unkind, I could not resist the temptation of showing my visitors so great a character.

To gain admittance, however, within the walls of my fat friend required some consideration. The old house-keeper's dislike to me was so great, that she invariably denied her master to me whenever I ventured to call, and I was therefore obliged to effect my object by stratagem.

The road from my residence was, as I have said, a mere sheep track winding round hills dove-tailing the one into the other in so extraordinary a manner, that no visitor to old Margaret's stronghold could possibly be discerned until actually at the threshold.

It was a beautiful day on which our party, consisting of my friends Bolton and Farquhar, their wives, a favourite servant, and two men to assist in boating, started for Llan——. I had stated nothing to my guests relative to Mr. Pugh Williams, except that he was my friend, and the clergyman of our parish, and that I intended asking him to join us. I only hoped by coming upon him suddenly to catch him unprepared to receive visitors; for the hero of my story was one who had a total disregard to all outward appearance, more especially in dress.

We were within half a mile of Mr. Williams' abode

when, calling my servant to my side, I ordered him to gallop forward, and by some means or other, should he find him at home, keep him in conversation until we came up, but to say nothing of our party being at hand.

I had no fears that Morgan would be refused admittance, for Margaret's heart beat kindly towards him. I could not have chosen a better assistant, as the sequel will show.

My man, obedient to orders, dashed forward, our party meanwhile proceeding slowly. The half mile, however, was soon got over, and on rounding a small larch plantation, we found ourselves at the door of my greatly startled friend.

Never shall I forget the astonishment depicted upon the countenances of all my companions, so perfectly unprepared were they to see a clergyman of the Church of England—a man whose weight was double that of the generality of mortals—attired as the Rev. Pugh Williams was on that occasion. He was dressed in a coat that had once been black, but was now turned brown from age, and in elongations of the same hue, entirely divested, like the other garment, of buttons, for which useful adjuncts wooden skewers were doing duty.

It was with the greatest difficulty that any one of the party restrained themselves from breaking out into laughter, more especially the ladies. Most ludicrous was it to watch the twists and turns that my poor friend made to avoid giving a full view of his huge person, encased in inexpressibles whose holdfasts were of such a temporary description. Nothing, however, could have succeeded better. My man acted his part so well that we had the parson on the very doorsteps. There was no possibility of escape. In an instant I was off my horse, and had grasped his hand. Leading him up to my friends, he was formally introduced, and they so warmly seconded my importunate request that he should join our party, that, despite old Margaret's interference and black looks, he yielded consent; only begging for time to change his clothes, out of respect, he said, for the ladies, a petition which we would on no account allow, alleging that our time was short.

The strawberry mare was soon saddled and brought round to the mounting-block; and gently did the parson settle himself in the saddle, not caring to trust too much to the very doubtful fastenings I have alluded to.

“Well, Charlie, my boy,” said Mr. Williams, ad-

dressing himself to me, as we turned from his door, "it was hardly fair your coming upon me unawares, and with these dear ladies, too; but you're always up to some of your tricks. Marget, I tell you, Charlie, will owe you one for this. It was always a difficult matter to unearth me when she was at home; you never were a favourite. I fear from this time henceforth the doors of the parsonage—yes, the parsonage it is called by the poor, simple folk about here," continued my friend, turning round in his saddle, and directing his conversation to the lady who rode on the near side, unknowingly exposing at the same time a very ugly mending in his habiliments, where the old housekeeper had not particularly studied the colour of the garment she had patched; "but it is, to be sure, a queer-looking den for a clergyman to inhabit. Nevertheless, it suits me, and that is enough. I only hope that we shall be able to show you some sport. I have fished Llyn——, man and boy, these thirty years, and many a score of pike I've killed in that water yonder. It is true that there is too much sun, and scarcely a breath of air to curl the water, but that matters little on such a dark and lonely pool."

In such light conversation the distance was soon got over. The parson appeared to have taken the

two ladies entirely to himself; and it was evident to us, who were riding behind them—for the road was very narrow—from the mirthful countenances that were from time to time turned towards us, that Mr. Pugh Williams was to them a source of infinite amusement. Little did he then foresee the troubles that were in store for him ere he returned to the safe keeping of faithful old Margaret.

“What an extraordinary character your parson is, Stretton,” said Bolton, one of the friends between whom I was riding; “by Jove! I hope he is not going in the same boat with us! He will swamp us; and I must tell you, old fellow, I can’t swim. Leave him on shore in charge of the prog baskets; he will be much more at home with them, I should think, to judge from appearances,”

“You are wrong, then, Bolton,” I replied; “Williams is about the best hand with a paddle that I know; his strength is enormous; his activity beyond belief; and he is, without exception, the smallest eater I have ever met. There are besides few better sportsmen to be found in the Principality. I wish you could see him out with the harriers on ‘Bones,’ as he calls that old strawberry mare he is riding, you would be astonished. I know not which to admire

most, the pluck of the rider, making his way up and down these awful dingles at the pace he does, or the mettle of that ragged hipped animal, which seems to groan under his enormous weight. But wait a bit, he will perhaps astonish you, more especially if he gets upon his college life. But here we are, close to the lake ; and, as luck will have it, both the punts are afloat—there will be ample room for all.”

It took but a few minutes to assist the ladies to dismount, and to ease the ponies of their panniers ; which done, the animals were all sent to a small farmhouse, distant about a quarter of a mile. During the absence of the men, the contents of the baskets were unpacked, and everything was made ready for our *al fresco* meal, which we agreed to discuss at once, as the sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky, and we thought that the evening would be the most likely time for the fish to run.

“Why, Charles,” said the parson, seating himself between the ladies on the grass, with excessive caution, “what were you thinking of when you chose such a day as this to come to Llyn—— pike-fishing ? It’s too bright by half, man ; and every old woman knows that pike are not fit to kill before August ; but we’ll

have some of them out, just to please the ladies. How are you off for bait?" he continued, raising the lid of the creel, and pulling out a salmon peel. "Shame, shame upon you, Stretton! I'm blest if you have not been killing salmon fry; and you too above all others, that call yourself a fisherman."

"Be not too hard upon me, Williams," I replied; "bait I was obliged to have, and nothing shines like Skirling. I was anxious to show sport; and you know that this continued drought has settled all fly-fishing until we can have a fresh. Had our glorious river been in order, we should to-day have been at the Rocky Holes, and you would not have had the pleasure of meeting these ladies. But will you, my friend, attend to them, whilst I find something wherewith to quench my friend Farquhar's thirst."

Nothing could be more beautiful than the turf on which, after a time, we were all seated; but, alas! there was no shade—not a tree growing by the side of that deep and lonely pool. By the advice of the parson, all the preliminaries for our sport were arranged before commencing dinner. Reels were fixed, beer and spirits were deposited in the lockers, and all things were made ready to commence an onslaught as soon as a breeze should raise a curl upon the water, or

a few friendly clouds show themselves in the sky.

Nothing could exceed the good spirits of the entire party; but the gaiety of Williams surpassed that of all the others.

My friend Farquhar, who was really a very clever man, though perhaps he had rather too good an opinion of himself, appeared to fancy that the parson was fair game, and made it a point to differ with him on all subjects. Frequently did I feel my cheeks flush with indignation at the severity of the satiric irony with which he retorted the gentle badinage of the man that he was endeavouring to turn into ridicule. But Farquhar had found his match. It mattered not what subject was broached, whether theological, political, or, indeed, sporting, the parson was "all there." It was ludicrous to hear my fat friend taking up the line at which Farquhar would leave off in Dante or in Juvenal, and showing himself equally familiar with quotations from Byron, Pindar, and Pope. As for the last-named poet, they fairly quarrelled over him; and I shall not soon forget the parson, as he rose from the ground, and corrected Farquhar in his reading of the following line,

"Manners make the man, the want of them the fellow."

"Worth! man, worth!" screamed Williams, quite

forgetting the tender fastenings which bound him in his clothes. "You are quoting from the old copy books, man. You're wrong—you're wrong; and I'll bet you a sovereign on it!"

"Done with you, sir!" exclaimed Farquhar, equally excited in his manner. "I'll make it five with you."

"Done with you, Mr. Farquhar," retorted Williams. "Although betting is not a habit I am given to, I'll make it ten."

"Done!" replied Farquhar. "Now, where can we find a Pope?"

"I have one at home," answered the parson; "and on our return, you shall see that your memory has failed you for once; and that the poor vicar of Llan—— has not had to succumb to Mr. Farquhar."

I felt glad when the subject was changed to swimming, in which art I knew the parson to be well versed; and heartily did we laugh at a most animated description which he gave us of the manner in which, at a picnic-party, he had eclipsed all others at diving. A silver fork had accidentally been dropped into a very deep hole, into which tumbled a cascade of some fifty feet in descent. After three others had tried their powers in endeavouring to recover it, success at last rewarded the efforts of my reverend friend.

“But surely, Mr. Williams,” said Farquhar, “you did not accomplish that feat with your clothes on?”

“No,” replied the parson, “I just requested the ladies to retire for a little—stripped myself—and was down in no time. I had it at the first attempt. The others suffered themselves to be drawn in under the fall, though they were all good swimmers. It was indeed a very ugly header. I was better dressed, Mr. Farquhar, on that occasion.”

This was said with an expression of such deep meaning, that Farquhar understood it and remained silent for some moments. I at once saw that Mr. Williams was not the man to take tamely anything approaching to an insult from a stranger, whatever amount of joking he might receive from a friend.

A gentle breeze that suddenly sprang up was hailed by me with delight, as a good excuse for putting a stop to any further bantering on the part of Farquhar.

“You’re right, Stretton,” said Williams, rising gently from the ground, “we shall have plenty of wind presently. Do you see those clouds rising in the south-west? Had it been later in the year, we should have had a rare evening’s sport. But trolling

for pike is but tame work after salmon-fishing. Give me the fish that fights above water. Charles, by-the-by, you must let the ladies go with me. I will take James Morgan, and back our rods against yours. It is you that have taught me to bet, Mr. Farquhar."

Of course I acceded to all that my friend wished ; and was agreed that he, with the ladies, my servant, and one man, should take the sedgy side of the lake, as being most likely to afford sport ; whilst Bolton, Farquhar, myself, and the other man, should take the opposite one, and work round to the spot from whence we had started.

The sun, which had shone so brightly, was by this time clouded over, and the glossy surface of the lake was ruffled to an extent that promised well for sport.

Having seen the parson and his party fairly off, we jumped into our punt. Bolton and Farquhar fished from the sides, whilst I, who paddled at the stern, suffered my bait to spin leisurely, trusting to chance for a run.

Scarcely had five minutes elapsed, when a wild shout from the parson's punt attracted our attention ; and on looking round, we saw that he was in holt, and apparently with a heavy fish.

“Confound it, Stretton,” said Farquhar, “that fat friend of yours will beat us now. Do you really believe that he is as good a swimmer as he pretends to be? I should like to test him.”

“I do believe him to be an excellent swimmer,” I replied; “and will back him to swim you across the pool for a five-pound note, and give you five minutes’ start. Say, will you take me? We will send the ladies away whilst you divest yourself of your clothing. As for Williams, the day being so warm, he will scarcely take the trouble to uncase himself from the rags that he is in, and to reskewer those well-worn inexpressibles which have caused you so much merriment to-day.”

“Done with you, Stretton,” replied Farquhar, somewhat sneeringly; “only get the ladies away—my wife might object; and——”

Whilst he was speaking, a heavy fish took his bait; and whirr, whirr, whirr, went his reel, in spite of the way in which he was holding on him.

“Give him line, man, give him line!” I exclaimed, fearing that he would be broken; “perhaps he has not gorged—up with the point of your rod.”

“By Jove! I’ve one too!” cried Bolton, and his winch began paying out line at a pace which also be

tokened a heavy fish ; “but where the deuce is he going to ? Take care, Farquhar, old fellow, or you’ll cross my line. Why, in the name of all that’s ugly, don’t you hold on him ? There, as I expected, our lines are fouled !”

And so it was. Which of my two friends was to blame, it was impossible to say. Bolton found fault with Farquhar ; Farquhar with Bolton. As for myself, I laughed heartily. There they stood, pulling at one another, hardly knowing whether the one or the other had a fish at the end of his line. Suddenly, however, a heavy pull brought the points of both rods down ; an instant afterwards their lines slackened ; fish, tackle, all was gone—they were both broken.

The disgust depicted upon the countenances of both was great ; for as neither of my friends had any pretensions to being a good fisherman, the loss to them was the more grievous. The damage done was, however, soon repaired. In less than ten minutes both were at work again ; and ere the hour had elapsed, the former had killed two fish, and one had fallen to the rod of the latter.

In the distance we could see the other party working steadily round, and, indeed, nearing the spot

from whence we had started, and where the *débris* of our luncheon still remained.

“Who is that so coolly helping himself to our comestibles?” said Bolton, covering his eyes with his hand, to screen them from the sun; “by Jove! he’s a free-and-easy fellow!”

Turning my head, I could see some one lying on the ground, near where our things were left; but whether he was regaling himself or not I could not say.

“I do not think,” I replied, “that anyone would touch our property; the lake is fished only by ——, who is lord of the manor, or by his friends; and —— is so popular among these hills, that I feel convinced no one would willingly offend him. We shall soon, however, see who he is—we will make towards him.”

I had not paddled above three hundred yards, when a fish took my bait, spinning unheeded at the stern of the punt, and, after about ten minutes’ play, Farquhar gaffed for me, and pulled into the boat a pike of about thirteen pounds weight. Shortly afterwards we landed, and found the parson’s party already ashore.

“What have you done, Frank?” said Pugh Wil-

liams, advancing to meet us; "let us see the contents of your lockers. What! only four? Why, man, the ladies have beat you hollow—eleven runs, and killed nine—not bad sport, eh?"

"You have indeed beat us," I replied; "and delighted I am that you have shown the ladies some sport. But, Williams, can you tell me who that was who appeared to be taking so much care of our provisions during our absence? I decidedly saw some one helping himself."

"There was some one, indeed, Frank; but—but—I sent him away—he ought to have known better; but I will pledge my existence that he touched nothing."

"Who was it?" I inquired.

"I will tell you," answered the parson, putting his arm within mine, and leading me away. "Frank, it was Sammy; yes, Sammy, my brother. Fancy his impertinence—when will he know his place?"

"What!" I exclaimed; "you do not mean to say that you have ordered your brother away? I am indeed distressed—simple and good-natured he is, but foolish or impertinent he is not. Surely you were not ashamed of your own brother? Was it that he had his farming dress on?—but, no, his rig could not

have been more unsightly than your own. Which way did he go? I will—I must have him back—pretty return, indeed, will Sammy think it for all the hospitality I have received at his hands.”

“No, no, Frank,” continued the parson, “oblige me by not recalling my brother. Were we alone, I should have no objection; but the ladies, Frank—the ladies. Sammy is all very well, but—but—and then again there’s that man Farquhar. Frank, I do not somehow like that man. Did he think that I did not see through his impertinence during dinner? I tell you, Frank, that he was endeavouring to turn me into ridicule in every possible way.”

“Never mind, my dear Williams,” I replied, “you were his match in every way; and, indeed, I gave him to understand that I thought he had gone too far. But think no more of it. Now, listen to me, my friend. I will give you an opportunity of having your revenge. Nay, do not interrupt me. The fact is, Farquhar thinks himself a capital swimmer, and I have backed you to swim against him across the pool. We can send the ladies away. Say, will you take him? I know that you can beat him; and I should so like to take the conceit out of him, although at heart he is a good fellow.”

“No, Stretton, I will not to-day. As I said before, were the ladies not here, I might do even that. It is true, I am not accounted as very High Church; but I should indeed be grieved did those ladies go away with the idea that I had no respect for the cloth. Now, listen to me, Frank. Do you mind a good ducking? If you do not, I will tell you what I *will* do. I’ll swamp the boat. Nay, nay, do not interrupt me!”—seeing that I was about to protest against so mad an act. “You get Mr. Farquhar to come with me the next turn round the lake. I will tell him that I can show him a spot where he will run a fish immediately. Bring Morgan, for he is a good swimmer, and will not mind a wetting. Well, when we are in the deepest part of the lake, I will quietly seat myself on the gunwale of the punt; over we shall all go; and then we shall see who will be the first to reach the shore.”

“But, my dear Williams,” I said, laughing, “it is true that I can swim, but not as you do. Now, suppose you allow me to be a spectator from the shore. I can then calm the fears of the ladies, for, believe me, they will be awfully frightened. Why, Mrs. Farquhar will go into hysterics. No. You shall have Morgan. Of course, I must acquaint him of what

he may expect. I think I would rather not have the ducking to-day."

"Well, well," continued the parson, "I will let you off. It is true, your clothes are better than mine. Perhaps that has something to do with it."

Assuring him that it was not from fear of injury to my habiliments, but from a want of confidence in my swimming powers, that I declined his offer, we rejoined the others.

"I have spoken to Williams, Farquhar," I said, touching my friend on the shoulder, as he lay on the ground talking to his wife, "and he begs to decline swimming to-day."

"Very well, all the better for you, Stretton; you have saved your five pounds. But are you not going to continue fishing? The best time for fish to run is the evening, and the breeze has freshened."

"Certainly," I replied, "and this time you shall go with the parson; he knows every inch of this water, and will take you to the best places. I will remain with the ladies, as they prefer being on land, the punts having taken in so much water."

"And so I am to have the pleasure of taking the next trip with you, Mr. Williams," said Farquhar, with a slight curl of contempt upon his lip. "We

will see which is the better man. My rod against yours for a pound."

"Most happy shall I be," replied Williams, "to gain a hint upon trolling from so practised a hand as Mr. Farquhar. I will not accept your wager. I have one on already, you know. What say you? Shall we start at once?"

"I am ready, sir; but who will take the other paddle? I am no hand with such a tool as that, pointing to one of the paddles in the boat. Had it been but a scull, I think I could have shown you what pulling is. I presume you were not in the boats when at Oxford, Mr. Williams?"

"No, I had not that honour, Mr. Farquhar; but Stretton's man, Morgan, will come with us. He is an excellent hand. Will you not, Morgan?"

This was said, with a singularly roguish look, by the parson.

"Certainly, sir," replied Morgan; "but I think we have no need to go very far out. The fish lie near shore."

I began to think that my man did not much relish the joke.

We all now moved towards the punts. I assisted my friends in getting their tackle in order, placed

some more beer in the lockers, at the same time abstracting everything of any worth, and shoved them off. For some time we watched them as they paddled slowly, keeping near to the bulrushes, which grew to some height on that side of the lake, when suddenly a great commotion in the punt betokened that a fish was hooked, and by Farquhar. When, after some play, it was pulled over the side, they pursued their course, bearing more across the lake. We therefore at once determined to walk round, and take up a position opposite to them. I was glad that the proposal to move emanated from the ladies, as it rendered me less liable to the suspicion of being concerned in a practical joke.

It took us about twenty minutes to reach the desired spot, where we seated ourselves, watching the party in the punt—the ladies with evident interest.

“I am glad, Mr. Stretton, that my husband has had such good sport,” said Mrs. Farquhar; “do you think he will kill any more? I never knew any one so fond of fishing as Alfred.”

In reply, I told her that I expected they would have excellent sport, for that they were approaching the best part of the lake; at the same time bidding her keep her eyes upon her husband’s move-

ments. The fact was, I had seen, as I fancied, Farquhar raise his hand, as if to strike a fish. I had also observed that though, up to this, Williams had not attempted to fish, he was now commencing to troll.

Mrs. Farquhar had not long to wait, for a loud shout told us that one was in holt; a fish which again fell to Farquhar's rod.

"Your husband has him!" I exclaimed.

"Oh! I am so glad," said the delighted lady, clapping her little hands; "I hope it is a heavy fish. Alfred will be so pleased with his day's sport. What a dear, nice man Mr. Williams is! I really do not think him ugly, although he is so fat."

"By the look of Farquhar's rod, and the commotion in the punt," I replied, "it must be a very heavy fish. I trust that Farquhar is not foul in anything. The weeds extend a long way out. But what is Williams doing?—he is going to assist your husband; I fear that he is fouled. If they are not more cautious, they will be upset. Look! look! do you not see?—the water is nearly to the gunwale. By Heavens! they are over!"

A wild scream from the ladies brought me a little to my senses; and I began to think that we had carried the joke too far. We all hurriedly rose from the

ground, and rushed to the water's edge. Neither Mrs. Farquhar nor Mrs. Bolton made any ridiculous display of feeling; but both were deadly pale, the former especially so. Mrs. Bolton, I fancied, by the steadfast gaze she fixed upon the immersed party, did not fancy it such a joke as her husband, who had warned her of what was about to occur, considered it.

As to Bolton and myself, we were in ecstasies. We knew that there was no danger, and I felt assured that Williams would see to the safety of all. Nothing could be more ludicrous. With intense delight I heard the parson challenging Farquhar to come on.

"Come on," he said; "I'll take your five pounds now, Mr. Farquhar, that you do not touch land as soon as I. Make for where Stretton is standing—there are no weeds."

What reply Farquhar made to the challenge none of us could catch; but decidedly it was not of an amiable description, and I fancied Mrs. Farquhar looked annoyed.

On they came, puffing and blowing, Williams in advance, closely followed by his rival; Morgan and the boatman far behind. It was patent to all that the parson was a perfect adept, and that neither of

the others had a chance with him. I need not tell the reader that he was first to reach the land.

How shall I describe the appearance of my fat friend, who was only slightly exhausted, as he made his way up the bank to where the ladies stood? His coat pockets, always large, were rendered enormous by the quantity of water they had taken in, which now poured in torrents down the back of his legs. A hundred little jets, at every movement of his huge body, squirted forth in every direction; and from his unmentionables the water descended in streams, some of which, as he laughed, actually reached the dresses of the ladies. The parson was as one beside himself; he appeared to have no control over his risible organs, and ill did he conceal the delight with which he regarded the revenge he had taken on Farquhar.

At last his victim reached the shore; but how ungraciously did he return his acknowledgments for the oft-repeated expressions of sympathy vouchsafed by the ladies! Without deigning any reply to the parson, who most humbly tendered his apologies for his clumsiness in upsetting the boat—without vouchsafing even a single word to myself, in reply to my wishes that he might not catch cold—he merely signified to his wife his desire that she should prepare to start home immediately.

“Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Farquhar,” said Pugh Williams, with a most comical smile, “about your husband’s catching cold. I’ll rig him out—there are plenty of clothes at the parsonage for every one ; and whilst we are changing our habiliments, the ladies shall make tea. Old Margaret will be charmed to see you all; more especially Stretton—will she not, Charlie?”

“I am rather doubtful of that,” I replied, ready to burst with laughing ; “but I must away with Rees after the horses ; so pack up the things as fast as you can, and have all ready by my return.”

Begging all those that were wet to take some brandy to counteract the effects of cold, I hurried off with the boatman ; and thanks to the assistance of the tenant at the farm, it was not long ere we had rejoined the lugubrious-looking party. Pugh Williams, however, I found as I had left him, joyous to a degree, full of fun, and unbounded in his attentions to the ladies, whilst Farquhar still showed unmistakeable signs of being much annoyed ; the manner in which he refused the repeated offers of a change of clothes by the parson bordering on insolence.

Now, I confess to having felt a great desire to see the end of the day’s adventure at the parsonage ; but

the ladies, whose spirits seemed damped by Farquhar's intolerable ill-temper, determined to proceed home.

"Well, Charlie, my boy," said Williams, "I am indeed sorry that none of the party will honour my poor home. Marget will surely expect you; she will be sadly disappointed—don't you think she will, eh?"

"No, by Jove! I don't think that she will be in the least disappointed," I replied; "but we all perfectly appreciate your kindness and attention—more especially Farquhar; he would look well in your clothes—don't you think so, eh?"

"Charles," continued the parson, in a subdued tone, "I meant what I said when I asked you all to my house; if you will not come, mine is the loss. But I have a matter of great moment to talk over with you; and as I presume we shall meet on Sunday, I will reserve what I have to say until then. Charles, there is—there is a lady in the case."

"What?" I exclaimed.

"Hush!" replied the parson, putting his finger to his lips.

"So be it," I answered.

The conversation with the parson now entirely dropped, and I joined the rest of the party,

which proceeded onward as fast as the uneven nature of the ground would admit. In a short time we came to a stile—from whence was a path down a steep bank, evidently a short cut to the parsonage—where Williams made a dead stop.

“Good evening to you, ladies,” said my eccentric friend, raising his hat from his head with some little difficulty, owing to its being so wet. “This is my nearest way home—I trust that we may meet again. Charlie, God bless you!—remember Sunday. Mr. Farquhar, I will let you off your bet.”

So saying, he backed the mare, and pressing his heel to her side, the old animal made two bounds, cleared the stile, and galloped down the bank at a pace which astonished us. We watched the reverend gentleman in silence for a few seconds, till some trees hid him from our sight; but the distance was not too great to preclude the possibility of catching his voice as he declaimed with marked emphasis,

“Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow;
The rest is all but leather and prunello.”

“A glorious morning, sir; and the river is in splendid order,” said my servant, as, drawing up the blinds, he awoke me, after a lengthened absence from

my home. "The river is full of fish, sir, and you may do good work amongst the rocks, if you will but go up. I passed by Cafan Shone Lewis yesterday, and the pool was alive with them; yet somehow I think, sir, that we are going to have another fresh; they were so uncommon proud of showing themselves out of water. I think you ought to go up, sir."

"I will, Jem," I replied, springing from my bed, and hastening to the window, from whence I could see that a finer day for salmon-fishing never gladdened the heart of the most ardent follower of the gentle art.

"Has the river been tolerably quiet during my absence?"

"Yes, sir," replied Griffiths; "I believe that your friend, Mr. Pugh Williams, has been up—indeed, I know he has, for I was told that he had killed two fine fish on the Fernant; a capital catch that, sir—I don't think that there is a better on the river from Builth to Hay."

"Nonsense, man, nonsense," I said, interrupting my man, than whom a better sportsman it would be difficult to find; "there are far better streams than that, and where fish are far more easily caught. I tell you, Jem, that it is only a real good hand, and

one that knows the river, who will ever attempt to throw the Fernant from our side of the river. It is a dangerous spot—one false step, as you know, on those slippery and sunken rocks, and the unlucky wight has a ducking to be by him long remembered. However, James, you may now go; and after breakfast we will make our way for the Cafan Shone Lewis, a pool I hold as second to none on the river Wye.”

Now the reader will please to bear in mind that the conversation I have just related occurred twelve years ago; and, strange to say, twelve years this day on which I commence penning a few of my recollections of “Sport and Sportsmen.” Yes, the twelfth of May is a day to be by me remembered, as the one on which more fish fell to my rod than on any other, and one on which I was accompanied by my good but eccentric friend Mr. Pugh Williams, the incumbent of the parish in which I then resided; but who, alas! like many more of my early associates, has quitted this for, I trust, a better world.

It was about eleven o'clock when, having walked the distance, we reached the well-known pool, bearing the not very euphonious name of Cafan Shone Lewis, before alluded to by my servant as being full of

fish, and which I found to be in excellent order ; the heavy rains which had a week previously flooded the river having left that peculiar brown tint upon the water which is so much prized by anglers, and known throughout the Principality as “maund.”

Seating ourselves upon the rocks, for a time we watched the river, a gentle breeze from the south giving a slight curl to the otherwise unruffled surface of the upper part of the pool, but in no way affecting the lower end, the water there becoming more disturbed as it hastened to throw itself over a succession of rocks, which for some distance formed a series of small cataracts, which, indeed, was the character of that part of the river.

“There he is, sir,” said Griffiths, pointing to a frothy circle which, slowly going down the stream, plainly told that a fish had risen. “Throw over him, sir, at once; he’ll take, I know—he did but make his turn. I should judge him, by his tail, to be a heavy fish. I like to see them rise in that way. It is not the fish that throws himself out of water that is going to be taken.”

Agreeing with Jem in all he had to say as to the habits and movements of the salmon tribe, I drew on my waterproof trousers, seized my rod, and walked

some twenty yards higher up the river, where I commenced to throw.

For some time I worked my rod, but to no purpose. My fly was playing beautifully about an inch beneath the surface, when suddenly a slight break on the water, and a tug at my line—that tug so unmistakeable to all fishermen—told me that I was in holt of a fish.

“I have him, Jem !” I cried out, as the “monarch of the stream,” throwing himself out of the water, gave us an opportunity of forming some idea as to what might be his weight. “I have him ; but he is not killed yet.”

Again throwing himself out of his native element, at least three feet, he dashed right across the stream. Whirr, whirr, whirr, went my reel, as the line slipped through my fingers, I all the while endeavouring to keep him from the rocks with which the opposite side of the river was studded.

“He’ll beat twenty pounds, sir !” cried Griffiths, unslinging the gaff-hook from his shoulders, and descending the bank, so as to be in readiness to secure our desired prize. “He’ll beat twenty pounds, sir. He has got a back like a hog. I only wish I had this in him”—holding up the hook.

“Don’t be in such a hurry with your gaff; he is not to be so easily taken as you imagine,” I replied, the fish at that moment having again thrown himself high into the air. “I tell you, James, the chances are that he will break me.”

The words were scarcely uttered, when to my infinite annoyance I discovered that my line was fast round a sunken rock; giving every indication of the loss not only of a splendid fish, but of point, and some twenty yards of as good hair line as was ever manufactured, albeit it was home-made.

What to do I knew not. No ford was there within a mile, by which I might send my servant across the broad and rocky stream that separates the counties of Radnor and Brecknock.

There I stood, unconscious whether the fish was free or not; only knowing that any attempt on my part to extricate the line must end by my being broken.

“A pretty fix I am in, Griffiths,” I said, as again and again I raised the point of my rod, hoping to find that the fish had moved, and thus had freed my line; but no—one dull and heavy pull was the only answer that I received.

Half an hour at least had I wasted in my

futile endeavours to render my line free, when, the sound of a horse's footsteps behind me causing me to turn my head, I beheld, to my unspeakable pleasure, the burly form of my friend, Pugh Williams, riding down the narrow sheep track. He had come, as he afterwards confessed, to take a peep at the water, intending to throw that very catch the same evening.

"Fast as a rock, by Jove! Charlie," were the words of salutation with which I was greeted by the parson, words uttered before the slightest notice, on my part, had been taken of his presence.

"You are right, Williams," I replied; "and perhaps you will tell me what is the best to be done under such circumstances. I do not exactly wish to break my rod; it is bad enough to lose some twenty yards of line, and have my day's fishing brought to a close. I am, as you say, fast as a rock. Oh! that some one would show himself on the other side of the river, who would kindly pelt with stones that stubborn fish—for I believe that I still have him in holt—and thus make my mind at ease."

"Well, I am the man that will do that for you," replied the parson. "I only waited to see how you would get out of the dilemma. Cafan Twin Bach is scarcely a mile from this, and although the water

should reach my saddle-girths, in twenty minutes you shall see me on yon rocks. Hold on him gently. What beautiful order the water is in !”

“ Beautiful indeed,” I replied. “ But why not suffer my man to take your horse and cross the pool ? He is younger than you, and his weight some eight stone less.”

“ No, no, Charlie, I tell you that I will go ; both sides of the river are alike to me—not a rock is there from Plynlymmon down that I do not know. Hold gently on him—do not slack your line. I tell you that that fish shall be your own.”

“ A thousand thanks, Williams,” I replied ; but my words were thrown away, for on looking round I found that my clerical friend had turned his horse’s head, and at a rapid pace was making his way to Cafan Twin Bach, the oldest-known ford on the river Wye, and celebrated as the one by which Llewellyn, the last of the Welch princes, crossed, when he went to meet his death at the hands of the English, some eight miles higher up the river.

“ A wonderful gentleman that, sir,” said Griffiths, his eyes resting on the retreating form of my friend ; “ and if anyone can free your line, he will. There is nothing, to my mind, that that gentleman cannot do.”

“You are right, James, Mr. Williams is no ordinary person ; and although of such unwieldy proportions, perhaps there is not a better sportsman in the county. As to his heart, I shall say nothing ; his generous acts are well known.”

The reader may well believe that it was no pleasant occupation that of standing up to one's waist in water, waiting for the chance of having one's line extricated, but almost with the certainty of losing a noble fish. Not long, however, was I destined to be kept waiting, for my friend made such speed that ere a quarter of an hour had elapsed, we could see him coming along the road on the opposite side of the river ; and in less than ten minutes he had alighted from his horse, and, having filled both pockets of his coat with stones, was descending the steep and rugged bank that overhung the water.

Once at the edge of the stream, he hesitated not to make his way, knee-deep in water, over the treacherous rocks ; and selecting one less dangerous than the others on which to stand, he commenced to throw stone after stone at my stubborn antagonist.

The pockets of my friend were nearly emptied, when a large stone fell on the water close to my line,

which slackened, creating for a moment the belief that my fish was gone ; but such was not the case, for in a second afterwards, again showing himself, he darted down the stream at a pace which left but little doubt as to the difficulty of the task yet before me. In his determined run for life, he at one time rolled over the surface of the broken water, and at another twisted and turned among the innumerable rocks on the opposite side, around which I momentarily expected to find my line again fouled, but with far less chance of succeeding in clearing it, owing to the quantity drawn out, half a dozen yards being all that was left out of seventy in my reel. In despair of ever being able to kill my fish, I began to calculate the chances of trying the strength of my tack, when suddenly he made towards me ; but the nature of the ground, a high and wooded bank being in my rear, precluded the possibility of my backing out of the water, and thus keeping my line from slackening.

“ Wind up !—wind up !” screamed Pugh Williams.

“ Master, he’ll be off !” exclaimed Griffiths.

“ Do you not see that I am winding up ?” I said, slightly irritated at the want of thought in both, knowing, as they did, that one false step on my part would perhaps put an end to my piscatorial pursuits

for ever, the waterproof trousers which I wore, reaching far above my waist, being exceedingly dangerous among rocks.

“If I cannot turn his head up stream, he will break me.”

The words were hardly out of my mouth, when he made another rush down stream, the force of the water adding vastly to the pace, as it did to the weight of the fish.

I had now followed him for upwards of one hundred and fifty yards over rocks as slippery as glass, at times having the water within an inch of the top of my trousers, a fact of which I was being continually warned by my servant, when, to my dismay, I found that but one yard of line remained in my reel. Now indeed had the time arrived when the strength of my tackle was to be tested; but one yard left—that run out, both fish and line would be lost.

For a time I held upon my fish, resolved, if possible, not to offer an empty reel as a resistance to my scaly antagonist; but, as if determined to have the last yard, he continued his course down stream.

“What’s to be done, James?” I cried out, addressing my servant, while I followed my fish as well as I could over the rocks; “all my line is run out.”

“Chuck your rod in, master, and trust to chance.”

“Not I, Griffiths; I will try the strength of my tack, well knowing that another rush such as he has treated me to this day will end the matter.”

Fortune, however, favoured me greatly at that moment, for the last rush the fish made brought us to a large and deep pool, where, should I only be able to reel up my line, I had no fears as to my success.

Backing out of the water as far as possible, I commenced reeling up; my line, to my delight, running through the rings quite free from knots (snarls we call them). Suddenly, however, the fish made one more attempt at gaining his freedom, but failed; for having only a short line out he was easily turned, and in less than two minutes was gaffed by Griffiths, who had somewhat correctly guessed his weight, which appeared to be about nineteen pounds.

No sooner did my friend Williams, who had kept pace with me down the river, see that the fish was landed, than he hastened to regain his horse, on mounting which, he rapidly rode back, recrossed the ford, and before twenty minutes had elapsed was again with me; but not before another fish, one of lesser weight, had fallen to my rod.

“Two, by Jove! Charlie, that is good work,” said

the parson, seating himself on a shelving rock, and minutely criticising the fish ; “ why, I think I shall invite myself to dine with you to-day—a steak from that fish will be worth eating.”

“ And so you shall, my friend,” I replied ; “ there is no one I would more gladly see at my table. What say you, Williams, will you throw the catch ? There is another fish on it, for I saw him rise.”

“ No, Charlie, not to-day, I thank you all the same. The fact is, I have got my best clothes on, and your waterproof overalls would be of but little service to one of my calibre.”

After so reasonable an excuse, I pressed him no further, but, taking my rod, commenced to throw the lower part of the same pool—Cafan Shone Lewis.

For some time the parson watched me in silence, not speaking until I had nearly reached the place where the water commenced to break over the rocks ; when, rising from his seat, he said,

“ Look out as your fly comes over yon sunken rock—it is there you will have him, if anywhere.”

Hardly had my friend ceased speaking, when a fish took me, who, after once shewing himself, dashed down stream at a greater pace, if possible, than that of the first I had killed.

Again over the same slippery and pointed rocks had I to make my way. Whirr, whirr, whirr, again went my reel.

“What the deuce is the matter with the fish to-day that they all go headlong down stream? Hold on him if you can,” said Williams.

“I cannot,” I cried; “one would think by the way he pulls that he is a heavy fish, but he is not so.”

“There, he’s off again!” continued Williams. “Why, man, he is hooked foul; you have him by the dorsal fin, and have got your work cut out for you.”

The parson indeed told the truth, for never before or since have I had so desperate a struggle with a fish, one hour and a half being taken up in killing him.

“There’s number three, sir,” said my servant, giving the salmon a tap on the head with a stone, in order that he might the more easily extricate my fly, which was deeply imbedded in the back of my prize. “Who’d have thought that he’d have fought as he did? —why, he is not above five pounds in weight. So much for hooking a fish foul!”

But I will not weary the reader by giving a minute

description of the sport that each fish afforded, but merely state that eleven were hooked and nine landed before four o'clock that afternoon."

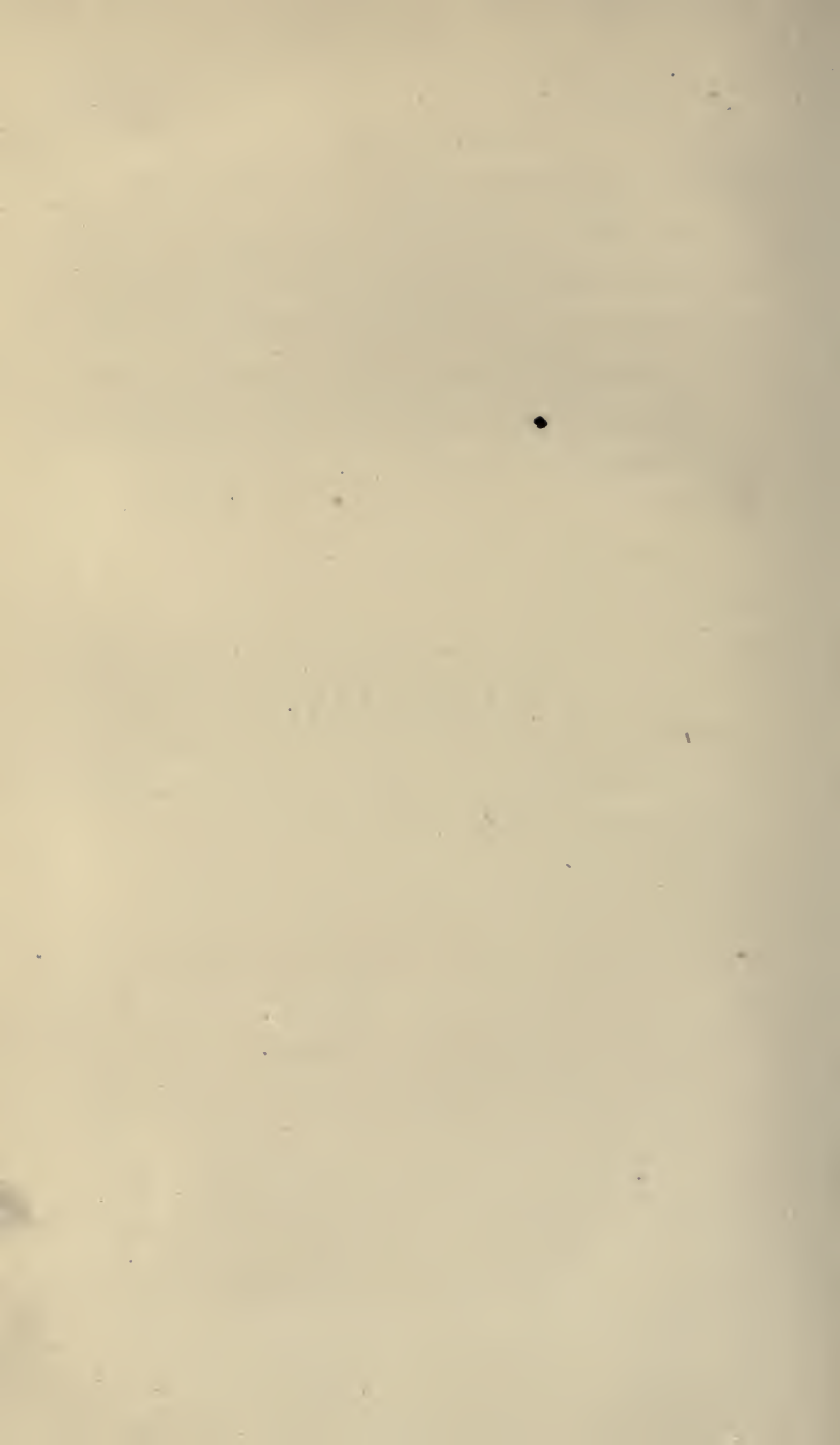
"Well, Charlie," said Pugh Williams, as we sat over our bread and cheese in the humblest of houses of entertainment, which, to judge from its primitive appearance, was as ancient as the record of the license of the ferry to which it was attached, a document which was granted in the fourth year of Edward the Third, "you have had a brilliant day. Man and boy I have fished this water forty years, and never knew such a day as this."

"Yes, my friend," I replied, "I have no hesitation in saying that this is the best day's sport I have ever had with the rod, and I have fished some of the best rivers that Scotland or the sister kingdom can boast of, and have no doubt that to-morrow will prove as good a day. Say, therefore, will you remain at my house to-night and try your luck? I will send for all that you require, as there is nothing to be done without wading."

"With all my heart," replied Williams; "and although I may not throw as good a line as yourself, my knowledge of the water may compensate for my want of execution."

Shortly after this we separated, the parson, who was mounted, taking his way over the lofty Daren Hill, whilst I and my servant took the shorter and easier road by the river side.

A CONTRAST.



A C O N T R A S T.

WHAT a contrast do we frequently see in the behaviour of certain owners and masters of hounds when in the field—the *suaviter in modo* predominating with some, whilst with others the *fortiter in re* is the method by which those who have incautiously incurred their displeasure are brought to due obedience.

It has been said, and perhaps justly, that no man can command a regiment, or hunt a pack of hounds, without giving vent to his anger in certain oaths which, on any other cause of annoyance, would never have been uttered.

Now, it so happened that I twice saw that which I assert strongly exemplified some years ago, whilst hunting in the county of Gloucester: both occurrences taking place within fourteen days. Anyone who has hunted regularly with the Badminton hounds, will remember a meet called the Lower Woods,

which, by-the-by, is about the worst in that country, so difficult is it to get a fox away. Well, it was from that covert that, during the life-time of the late Duke, than whom a more perfect gentleman never existed, I was a witness to one of the finest runs that could be chronicled in the annals of that splendid establishment. I remember—it was near to the town of Cirencester—that, every moment expecting to run from scent to view, our day's sport was brought to a premature and singularly disagreeable conclusion by the too forward riding of two gentlemen, one of whom was a minister of the Church of England, whilst the other held the no less responsible position of banker, being the head of a wealthy firm not a hundred miles distant from the abode of the noble owner of the pack.

Now it so happened that, on the day I allude to, his Grace, who, it is well known, never, under any circumstances, suffered his temper to get the better of that gentlemanly bearing which has left a halo around his name no time will obliterate, was greatly annoyed, and not without cause. Never shall I forget the occasion. A check of ten minutes having occurred, an interval sufficiently long to enable the greater part of the field to come up, the

Duke, galloping up to Will Long, a huntsman as celebrated in his own way as his Grace was in another, ordered him to call off the hounds ; and, as he did so, turned in his saddle, and said,

“Gentlemen, if your day’s sport is spoiled you may thank Messrs B—— and P—— for it, who appear to have been striving to catch the fox without the aid of hounds. Good morning to you, gentlemen. Home !”

The reader may fancy with what feelings the entire field regarded the hapless wights that had so summarily brought our sport to a close ; the smothered expressions of indignation, I will not say curses, that fell from the lips of many, and the looks, by no means pleasant, that met the eyes of the delinquents, who, without making any reply to the stinging remark of his Grace, followed at a respectful distance the pack, whose heads were turned towards home.

It was whilst in the act of lighting a cigar to cheer me on my way, for I had some ten miles to ride ere I could reach my quarters, that I was accosted by a gentleman attired in the uniform (blue and buff) of the Duke’s hunt, who inquired whether I was a brother of the Master of the M——shire hounds ; a question to which I answered in the affirmative.

“That being the case,” he said, “will you allow me to introduce you to his Grace? He is, it is true, sadly annoyed at being compelled to act as he has this day done; but, in truth, the overriding of some who hunt, and that regularly, with his hounds, has become so frequent, that he is determined to put a stop to it. The two gentlemen who have so distinguished themselves to-day, are about as good riders to hounds as England can boast of, more especially the one in the black coat, who, perhaps you are not aware, is a rector in this county—that rat-tailed, ragged-hipped animal that carries him so splendidly being a perfect wonder, and, if as good with other hounds as he is across this stone-walled country, invaluable. His pointers—for he shoots, and that well—are equally as lean as himself and horse. He is, however, singularly popular with all classes. The other man is well known, and rides good horses. Whether or not any feeling of jealousy has arisen between them to-day, I know not—I only know that we have lost a good day’s sport, having got far away from those detested Lower Woods.”

Thanking him for his kindness, and expressing how much I felt honoured and pleased by his proffered introduction—my way home, too, lying in the same

direction—we cantered forward, and soon came up with the Duke, whom we found chatting with a gentleman dressed also in the Badminton uniform.

“Allow me to introduce Mr. S—— to your Grace; he is brother to Mr. S—— who hunts M——shire,” said Captain T——, whom I soon discovered to be a near relative of the noble-looking man whom he had just addressed.

“Hah! Mr. S——,” replied the Duke, “I was not aware that one of the M——shire was in the field to-day. How is your brother? I hope my tenants keep the coverts quiet for him. They have my orders so to do.”

“Yes, your Grace,” I replied, “thanks to you the show of foxes has become good.”

Here, seeing that I regarded with marked attention the horse that he was riding, he continued,

“You appear to recognise this animal; perhaps you are not aware that I purchased him of your brother?”

“I do recognise him, your Grace,” I replied, “and was aware that my brother had parted with him. He was once my property, and I, believing him to be vicious, suffered him to have him. He was——”

"A most brotherly act, truly," said the Duke, laughingly interrupting me.

"The fact was," I continued, in my turn laughing heartily, "he was sold to me, after he had unfortunately nearly killed his rider at the Ross Steeple Chase, which he was about to win; that he nearly did so again by me is certain, having reared and fallen back upon me twice in one day. In my brother's stables he must have learnt better manners, otherwise, I feel assured, your Grace never would have become possessed of him."

"I can only say, Mr. S——," replied the Duke, "that, whatever bad habits this horse may have possessed, they are all taken out of him now. I know not so quiet an animal—a child might ride him."

Then, changing the subject of conversation, he expressed his regret at having been compelled to put a stop to the day's proceedings, through the heedless behaviour of the two gentlemen alluded to, whose history he again gave me, not one word of anger escaping from his lips, but rather expressions of admiration at the splendid riding that each invariably displayed. The generous feelings by which he was evidently inspired led me to form altogether an

exalted opinion of the noble owner of the Badminton hounds.

Here we came to a turn in the road, by the side of which stood a finger-post, which warned me that my way home lay no longer in the same direction as that of his Grace ; so, respectfully bidding him adieu, I quitted the main road, and pursued my way homewards alone.

A few days later, finding that the Berkeley hounds, a pack I had heard so much of, but had never seen, were coming to within an easy distance of the town in which I had located myself, a place which, with all its dulness, was admirably suited to hunting purposes, there being no fewer than three packs within reach of it, I determined to put in an appearance. At Felton accordingly I first set my eyes on that beautiful pack of bitches of which the late Earl Fitzhardinge was so justly proud. After having seen and admired them, it is with no discourtesy that I beg to differ with a quondam biographer, who states that that nobleman cared but little for symmetry in his kennels; and I must also confess my scepticism as to his ever having said, " I don't care for their looks—huntsmen forget to breed hounds for their noses ; they're all for looks. Give me the pack that will kill foxes."

I much doubt whether old Harry Ayres, that prince of huntsmen, will endorse that sentiment ; for certainly a more brilliant and even pack I never saw, and I believe that the symmetry and uniformity for which I at first admired them exist still under their present noble owner, than whom no better sportsman or finished rider could formerly be found.

There was much on that morning to render my spirits more than usually buoyant ; what with the fineness of the day, the wind blowing from the south, and the sky somewhat clouded, to say nothing of the yellow liveries peculiar to that hunt. The field, too, was large, for the meet was a good one ; and amongst the throng were many who could not pass unnoticed. So selecting a good-tempered, middle-aged, and highly respectable farmer, I fixed myself upon him, and found him to be a person capable of giving me every information as to the celebrities congregated that morning in front of the roadside inn.

“ Who is that ? ” I said, directing his attention to a stout, jolly-looking man in scarlet at that moment passing by, and who appeared to be most emphatic in his way of speaking, which, nevertheless, was productive of roars of laughter. He was mounted on a chestnut horse of no ordinary power, and which was rather above

his weight, which decidedly exceeded fourteen stone.

“Why, don’t ye know him?” replied my new acquaintance; “that’s Lord A——, the merriest chap in the field, and, they say, the cleverest; he’s talking to Mr. N——, that got all old Rundell and Bridge’s property. Lord A—— is always a-quizzing him as to what he does with a power of bad land that he has; I heard him t’other day ask him if his land would stand one sheep to an acre. You know Squire N——? No doubt he’s uncommon rich.”

Denying that I had the honour of the gentleman’s acquaintance, but acknowledging that I had heard of him and his great wealth, I continued my series of questions.

“Oh! that’s Lord D——,” he replied to one of my inquiries; “he can go with a vengeance, but he’s a butcher to a horse; woe betide the man that gets in his way! But look there,” pointing with his whip at a gentleman who, invested with a black coat which had seen much wear, was mounted on a rat-tailed, mealy bay horse, which I instantly recognised, as I did the rider, who was none other than Mr. P——, the divine who had been partly the cause of the summary termination of our day’s sport from the Lower Woods. “That’s the fellow to ride,” he continued; “he

has but that one horse, they say, yet hang me if I can go out without meeting him. There's not one this blessed day will see as much of the hounds as he will. He's a parson—you can't do better than stick to him ; that's to say, if you are well mounted. It has often struck me that he mistook his calling."

Telling my informant that it was not the first time I had seen the gentleman, I recounted to him all that had taken place on the day of our run from the Lower Woods, not forgetting the very gentlemanly manner in which the Duke of Beaufort had shown his distaste for overriding.

"Oh! yes, that's the Duke all over," he replied; "but it's different here, I can tell ye; wait a bit—wait a bit—you'll hear plenty of cursing and swearing by-and-by. The Earl's not one to suffer anyone to override his hounds."

Here the arrival of that nobleman, accompanied by numerous friends, put an end, for a time, to further conversation; and shortly afterwards the ringing voice of Harry Ayres was heard, as, calling to his hounds, he moved off towards the covert, at which we were assured a certain friend awaited us.

My new-made acquaintance having joined a group of men, with all of whom he appeared to be on friendly

terms, I mixed with the throng, among whom I suffered myself to be led away. A gentle trot of twenty minutes brought us to the covert side, where I soon found myself with many others, the sporting parson among the number, admirably placed, the wood there coming to a point which afforded a splendid chance of viewing "Pug" away.

There was, as is generally the case, a great deal of senseless chaffing and noisy talk, which appeared to disgust many who had come out for sport, and sport only, their looks telling plainly all that they felt.

The hounds having been thrown in, every heart beat high with hope, the cheering voice of Ayres giving a feeling of assurance that a speedy find was likely to take place, an expectation which was shortly afterwards realized, the hounds having hit upon the scent almost immediately on being thrown into covert, and, judging from their cry, being likely to break near where we were posted.

For about the space of ten minutes "Pug" hung about the covert, the hounds evidently driving him towards our corner, when suddenly they turned. The gladdening cry of "gone away!" then resounded from the further end of the wood. The fox had evidently endeavoured to break in a contrary direction, but

was headed back by the chattering of the throng of which I formed a member.

A prolonged "away!" broke from the lips of the parson, who up to this time had kept himself aloof from all, but who now gave unmistakeable proof of his desire that there should be no interference with his movements. Fixing his hat more firmly on his head, he leapt a high bulfinch fence, and galloped off in a different direction from that of the rest of the field.

For an instant I stopped to watch the movements of that strange man, my thoughts half bent upon following him, when I was again accosted by my friend the farmer.

"He's off—just like him," he said; "he always takes a line of his own. Come with me, sir—the parson's wrong for once."

"All right," I replied, and, putting spurs to our horses, we were soon mixed among the motley group that constituted the field.

As for about twenty minutes we galloped on, nothing could be more beautiful than the scene on which we gazed, enclosure after enclosure of turf land lying before us. Perhaps a little more music might have added to the delight which a splendid pack and a burningscent were affording us, but it is well known that

the cry of a bitch pack is far inferior to that of a dog one.

"Where's the parson?" I said to my yeoman friend, who appeared to know every fence in that part of the country; "I don't see him, and the field is thinning fast."

"Oh! he has overshot the mark this time—he's thrown out. But how's this?—I'm blest if they aren't at fault!"

At this moment I could see Ayres commence a short and somewhat rapid cast, proving his thorough knowledge of the art.

"Hark to Vengeance!" was the cry that emanated from his lips, as the entire pack, at once taking up the scent, acknowledged the truthfulness of his old favourite. "Forward!" was now the cry, not a fence that a child would crane at coming in our way!

"By Jove! there goes the parson—look at him—there he is!" exclaimed the farmer, pointing out with his whip a man in a dark coat whom I could see at some distance in the act of jumping the highest part of a stone wall, on both sides of which two ominous-looking dips gave strong indications that there was something dangerous.

"I'm blest if the hounds can get away from that man; they're no sooner in the field than he is."

"He is indeed a wonder," I replied; "he as-

tonishes me as much as does his horse," my own at the time giving unmistakeable signs of distress from want of condition, and making me rather anxious for another and prolonged check, an event which shortly afterwards took place, giving some of the tail an opportunity of coming up, and amongst others the noble owner of the pack.

That the hounds had far overrun the scent was evident to everyone, and it was equally certain that there was nothing to be done but to try back. Despite, too, the many and each time more extended casts that the huntsman made, sundry fears began to be entertained that our fox was lost.

"Tally ho!" all at once broke upon our ears, apparently at some distance on our right. "Tally ho! tally ho!" screamed some fools, who, instantly galloping off in the direction of the holloa, caused in the field a disorder which brought down on the parson's head such a shower of invectives from the noble Earl, that I, humble individual as I was, felt deeply incensed.

That the clerical gentleman's brilliant riding had in some degree previously excited the noble lord's wrath is certain, yet it must have appeared vastly unjust to everyone present that his lordship should breathe forth those anathemas, so richly deserved by others,

and those at such a distance that they could not hear them, on a man who had done nothing beyond beating every other person in the field. Long and loud was the rating the clergyman had to endure, his stoicism only adding fuel to the fire of the Earl's wrath, for he sat as he looked, "*sans peur et sans reproche.*"

The venom of the noble owner of Berkeley Castle being in some slight degree expended, all prepared to follow his huntsman, who, firmly relying on being able once again to recover the scent so long lost, had already trotted on, followed by his hounds.

A few minutes sufficed to bring us to the spot whence all believed the holloa to have been given, and where many footmen were congregated, the rising ground offering an excellent position for lookers-on. To the numerous interrogatories made, both by Lord Fitzhardinge and his huntsman, as to who had viewed the fox, no satisfactory reply could be elicited. In fact, it was a hoax.

The rage of the Earl was beyond all bounds. Not much less was that of Ayres, who, after giving vent to a few smothered oaths, accompanied with a look of intense disgust at the dismounted part of the field, trotted back to where the hounds had thrown up their heads. There he again made frequent casts; but,

alas! no good came from them. Our fears were realized—we had lost our fox.

“ Uncommon strange, isn’t it ?” said my still unknown friend, who had again sought me out ; “ I can’t think how they came to lose that fox. They made it good up to that deep lane ; and such a scent, too ! I’ll swear he took the lane. Do you know, I fancied I saw the print of his pad in the mud ! But who dare speak along with those hounds ? If I’d given an opinion—and mind, I’m calculated to give one—I should have brought down upon my head such another bevy of oaths as you heard those chaps get. Well, well, I think a country might be hunted without all that swearing. I tell you, I don’t like it—nobody likes even to be spoken sharp to, much less sworn at. But it’s every day the same. Neither is there much respect for persons. Did ye ever hear the story of a young fellow who was out one day with his lordship ?”

I shook my head in token of not having done so, and he continued :

“ Well, then, the young chap had been riding uncommon that day, having as nice a young horse under him as was ever mounted ; and they came to a check, just like as we did to-day. Now, you

know that his lordship is not what we call a first-rater across country, and is very apt to have a downer upon anyone that shows well forward—friend or not, it's all the same to him. Well, he began to curse and swear, and, at last, to d—n the eyes of the young fellow, which the latter didn't like. 'My lord,' he said, looking uncommonly proud, 'I didn't come out here to be d—d.' 'Then go home and be d—d,' replied the Earl, looking prouder still. Well, you may fancy that that shut the young fellow up—can't ye?"

Laughing heartily at what he had told me, I asked him if he really believed that to have happened, or to be one of the thousand stories placed to the credit of the Earl, not one of which did I believe.

"True enough, true enough; I remember on one occasion his lordship, who was, as usual, behind, a check having taken place, came up to where all the forward ones were planted in a deep lane, not one of them knowing how to get out of it. Well, that day he made a sweeper of it, by saying, 'D——n! Every one of you *over* the hedge.' Of course all laughed. Nobody thought anything of what he said—what would have been the use?"

But I must not dwell upon the faults of one who has gone to his account; of one who, from all we hear, died as every good man would wish to die. The benefits derived from the profuse expenditure of the late possessor of Berkeley Castle are known to all; his many acts of generosity are household words in the county of Gloucester. Who will not join us in the prayer, *Requiescat in pace?*

A DAY'S OTTER-HUNTING.

A DAY'S OTTER-HUNTING.

NEXT to fox-hunting and salmon-fishing, I know no sport which affords a greater amount of excitement than otter-hunting. There is something wonderfully exhilarating in finding oneself at break of day on the bank of some wild and wooded brook, more especially in the Principality of Wales, where you have the adjunct of exquisite scenery. It was there that I first was initiated into the mysteries of that craft, a friend of mine residing in the adjoining county having brought down a few couple of his otter-dogs, to which I added two or three of my own, old worn-out harriers, whose splay feet told too plainly that their days of speed were ended.

It was in the county of Brecon, on the banks of the beautiful Lynvy, that I first entered upon that sport. This small stream, abounding with trout, is one of the numerous tributaries of still more beautiful Wye, and its banks afford admirable shelter for the amphibious tribe already mentioned.

How well do I remember one July morning in the year of grace 1844, when at four o'clock I found myself sitting on the coping of Bronllys Bridge, anxiously awaiting the arrival of some friends who had expressed their wish to join me, and whose tardiness appeared much to annoy my companion and his huntsman, the dogs, also, one and all, displaying an unaccountable uneasiness.

"We must not wait much longer, sir," said my friend's servant, addressing his master; "we shall lose all scent; if I mistake not, they're winding him now."

"We will wait but a few minutes longer," I replied; "there are famous holts above the bridge; and it strikes me that we shall find immediately."

I had scarcely finished speaking when, in the distance, I could see coming towards us some five or six footmen, whom I recognised as the expected party. The attire of two of them, dandy dragoons, whose regiment was quartered eighteen miles distant, proved on their arrival anything but suited to the occasion, as, to their cost, they soon found out; for never did men get such a ducking as we all did that day.

Having introduced my friend to the new comers, we descended from the bridge, under which (the

buttress on our side being dry), the whole pack immediately flew.

“Hark to Sweetlips!” cried old Morgan, the huntsman, whom I could see a few yards above minutely inspecting a tump of fine sand which the receding waters had left dry, and who quickly returned to us with the joyous tidings that he had seen the drag of an otter, which was fresh. The little pack, however, had now taken up the scent, and were going at a merry pace—merry, indeed, for old ones, as they all were.

For a time they kept on one side of the stream, the fine turf in the large and beautiful meadows offering no obstacle to our running, when suddenly they appeared to be at fault.

“Yoik over!” cried Morgan, taking off his hat, and cheering them in. “Loo in there!—Loo in!”

But little incitement did the dogs require, for one and all, plunging headlong into the deep and rocky pool, swam through it, and scaled the opposite bank, the scent appearing each moment to increase.

“By Jove! Stretton, how are we to cross this?” inquired Captain L——, the very essence of a light dragoon, as he looked anxiously down into the dark waters below.

"Follow me ; I know the river, but mind your footing, the rocks are as slippery as glass."

Saying this, I led the party some fifty yards up the stream, to where a ledge of shelving rock ran right across from side to side, the only opening being a deep cleft, about three feet wide, near the centre, through which, when the river was low, the whole body of the water rushed with great violence. Over this it was necessary for us all to jump. I had crossed with safety, as had also the huntsman, and was in the act of ascending the opposite bank, when, a loud shout causing me to turn my head, I saw L—— up to his chin in the chasm, but holding on by the edge of the rock, which he had succeeded in catching. To render him any effectual assistance was impossible, and he could do little on his own behalf, as he could find no footing whereby to raise himself, the rock being hollow underneath.

"Can you swim?" I said ; "for if you can, let yourself go with the stream."

"I can't—I can't ! For God sake, help me !—I shall drown !" he replied in frantic accents.

"Hold on, sir, for a bit," said Morgan, fumbling in his pockets and pushing past me ; "I think I can manage it."

Making way for the old man, I watched what he was

about to do. To my astonishment, he drew forth three pair of dog couples, and, buckling them together, threw them over the head of the immersed Lancer, who, after sundry attempts, succeeded in getting them under his arm-pits. Then, with the assistance of all the rest, who had crossed safely, each holding the other by the hand, we pulled him out.

Changed indeed was the appearance of the young exquisite. After handing me his watch, prior to arranging his dripping garment, he thrust his hands into his coat pockets in search of his *porte-monnaie*. Although a slight degree of chagrin might have been perceptible in his handsome countenance, he was by no means daunted, much less did he evince the slightest inclination to give up his day's sport and return home. Luckily the day was delightfully warm, and there being no fears as to his catching cold, we followed, as fast as we could run, the little pack, which had by this time got far up the river.

The hounds had already found and unkennelled the amphibious animal, as we became well aware before we came up to them, which we did at a large pool. This was a place at which, if we failed to drive him away from it, the dogs would find great difficulty in killing him.

"There he goes down," cried Morgan, pointing out,

on the glassy surface of the water, a slight streak which, with the greatest difficulty, was made apparent to me.

"That's the tip of his nose, he's too cunning to show himself; they'll wind him directly. Hark to Garland!" he exclaimed, seeing a dog take to water, an act in which he was immediately followed by the entire pack, accompanied with a cry that made the valley of Lynvy ring again.

"There's music, Stretton!" said my friend, the owner of the pack; "you'll never hear such music as that with foxhounds. Hark to Vanity!"

Certainly nothing could surpass the excitement of the animals. The entire pack was in the water, and, to quote old Morgan's saying, "might be covered with a napkin." They gradually lessened the distance which separated them from their prey, the same tiny streak already referred to. Shortly afterwards this disappeared, and in its place was seen a round and troubled circle, which denoted that the fish-destroyer had dived. Then was it that the fun increased. The entire pack became mute, all scent being lost. With their heads erect, staring in every direction, they beat the water with their fore feet.

"Look out, gentlemen," said Morgan, "there's no

knowing where he will come up. Look out above there," he exclaimed, hailing some country lads who, attracted by the cry of the hounds, had joined us ; for the Welsh are proverbial for their love of hunting. Old and young, rich and poor, the love of venery is innate in them all.

"Here he is ! here he is !" burst forth at the same time from two or three voices far up the pool, the otter having swum right under the pack, which, scattered about, were now trying to make good the scent on both sides of the river. Old Morgan, however, soon got them together again.

It took but a few minutes to get the pack once more settled to the scent, when the same exciting fun awaited us up-stream as we had enjoyed farther down. To our regret, however, it was brought for a time to an abrupt end, every trace of the animal being soon lost. Everything that man could do was done by Morgan. Proceeding up one side of the river and down the other for a considerable distance, the indefatigable old man tried hard to recover the scent, which momentarily became weaker, but all to no purpose.

An hour had now elapsed, and there was but little probability of our succeeding in again hitting off our

otter. We were all, too, nearly as wet as the young soldier, who began to talk of returning to the residence of my brother-in-law, who was of our party, and at whose table I was expected to dine that evening with my friend, the owner of the little pack.

The idea of returning home now became so infectious that my friend expressed his intention of giving up any further trial, saying "that it was useless, and too late to try for the otter."

"Morgan," I said, "do you think that there is a possibility of recovering the scent?"

"I do, sir; and will stick to it until dark, if you will remain with me."

"Then I am your man," I replied.

A laugh went all round, and a shrug of the shoulder from my friends plainly indicated that they considered this an act of folly on my part.

However, they all left me; and, led by my brother-in-law, to whom every inch of the country was well known, made for M—— Castle, his beautiful residence, five miles distant.

"Now, sir, we'll try back," said old Morgan, a smile of confidence passing over his countenance. "We have left him in that big pool, and I'll swear to it—there's some holt that you don't know of."

Calling the hounds, we retraced our steps, still accompanied by a few labouring men, who appeared to have more confidence in the old huntsman than his master had, and had not proceeded far before we were met by the tenant of the farm on which was the pool where it was our purpose again to attempt the recovery of the lost scent.

"Lost him, sir?" he said, in a tone of inquiry, at the same time touching his hat respectfully.

"Yes, Jones, we have, I fear; but we will not give it up yet. We lost him in that large pool on your land," I replied.

"There are a plaguy lot of holts there, sir; and I think I can show you one that but few knows on; but it's an uncommon nasty place to get at. I happened by chance to see it when the water was uncommon low. You hit him off well to the head of the pool, did you not, sir?"

"Yes," I replied; "not only that, but we saw him dive—and from that moment the hounds never could make anything of him."

"Come with me, sir—I may be right; it strikes me he has taken holt under that large Pollard oak."

Thanking him for his civility, we hastened our steps, and soon reached the spot alluded to. Not

only was the water really far too high for *our* sport, but so dense was the covert, and so steep the bank, that our chances of again seeing the pisciverous animal were but slight.

“Now, sir,” said the farmer, as standing on the bank he leant forward and struck the trunk of an old weather-beaten oak, whose branches hung across the river, and caused a darkness over the whole pool, “I have seen many an otter killed in this water, in the days of the old squire—I means the grandfather of the present young gentleman. Old Probert, the huntsman, was alive then; and many a good day’s sport has found an end to it in this dark hole. Now, sir, I have an idea that you have left your otter under this bank; there is a holt right under here which runs to yon corner,” pointing as he spoke to a place where the ground formed a small promontory.

“There is, is there?” said old Morgan, divesting himself of his coat and waistcoat, and throwing his hat upon the ground; “it’s true it’s a foul place, but if there is, as you say, a holt there, I’ll chance it.”

Cutting the longest ashen stick that he could see, he lowered himself down the bank, his feet not

touching ground until the water had reached above his waist.

"I'll soon tell you, sir, if there's a holt here," he said, working with his pole, and soon satisfying himself, as he imagined, that the bank afforded no shelter to an otter.

"But wait a bit, sir," he said, continuing to drive his pole into every imaginary hole, standing at the time up to his neck in the water; "there's a holt, sir." The water was then reaching to his chin, as stooping, he worked away with his ash plant. "If the varmint is anywhere, he is here; we'll have him out!—we'll have him out!"

All this time the hounds, with ears pricked, were perfectly alive to all that was going on; and although not one dog opened, the entire pack appeared to enter into the enjoyment of the scene.

"He's in the old stump now, sir," said Morgan, as, catching hold of branch after branch, he finally landed himself on the bank, his quickened breathing telling plainly how great had been his exertions.

"I'll bet all I'm worth that he is in that old tree, and that he has got a holting-hole at the top. Farmer, have ye a cross saw?—the old tree is but fit for fire-wood—if ye have, let us have it."

The appeal to old Farmer Jones was not thrown away, for, mumbling something about the young squire's love of sport, he despatched a boy to the house for the necessary tool.

"I wish I had my spear with me," said Morgan, as, wet to his chin, he sat on the grass, and pushed a short black pipe into his mouth; "but you stopped that, sir. Master said that you wouldn't allow spears."

"You are right, Morgan," I replied; "I wrote to your master, and said that I wished for a legitimate hunt, and that we will have—fair play is a jewel. I wish they would come," I added, looking back in my anxiety for the return of the lad.

"You'll never kill him, sir—there's too much water; he'll be up and down—why, he can keep under water for five minutes. The river is far too full."

"Never mind. If, as you say, he is holted in that tree, we will see the end of it; and if you succeed in killing him, there are two sovereigns for your pluck. Here comes the boy."

I will not deny that I was beginning to get wearied with my day's sport. What with having risen at two o'clock, and having frequently during the day

dabbled in water up to my arm-pits, I thought it was about time to be done with it. It may be believed, therefore, that I was rejoiced to see the man return.

"I have brought two saws and a stocking-axe," said the youth, throwing the tools on the ground. His very soul appeared wrapped up in bringing the day's work to a successful issue, and in the sequel he really proved to be the one who enabled me to reach M—— Castle that evening with a degree of pride I had seldom felt before.

"You have done right, lad," said the farmer. Then, addressing me, he continued, "You'll never fall that old stump, sir; and, mind me, if the tree is hollow, he's near the top. Now, how will you manage that? 'Twould be a nasty fall into that dark pool."

Fortunately for me, nonplussed as I was, old Morgan had already in his mind arranged how to proceed, and it was with pleasure that I witnessed the lad Tim Lewis, with the smaller saw in his hand, climbing, or rather making his way, along the weather-beaten old tree, which, as I have before stated, hung nearly across the river.

"That's enough, lad," said Morgan, seeing the boy had reached half-way across the water. "Saw away —saw away, but mind your holding; they say that

all the bell-ropes of Talgarth Church tied together never fathomed the depth of that pool."

The lad, however, made no answer to the huntsman's warning, but continued his operations, which were by no means light, considering his position, and that one of his hands was entirely occupied in keeping the necessary equilibrium. At last he cried out, "All done!" the end of the hollow branch at the same time, preparatory to falling, giving sundry cracks. While we were regarding with the greatest attention the falling portion of the tree, how great was my astonishment when I saw the animal half out of the hollow trunk making ready for a dive into the same pool which had afforded us that morning such infinite sport.

"Loo in there!—Loo in!" screamed Morgan, now in ecstasy. The whole pack jumped into the water, but soon found to their cost that the amphibious animal was far from being beaten. "He has dived again," said Morgan; "keep a sharp look-out up and down—we're heading him now."

For a time the pack beat the water with their fore feet, twisting and turning in every imaginable direction, their dilated eyes bespeaking a knowledge that their prey was not far distant. Suddenly

a shout down the river attracted our attention, and on my running in that direction I was told that "the big brute" had risen again near to the bank, that a small terrier belonging to one of the bystanders had jumped in after him, and that both otter and dog had vanished under water.

"What!" I said, "the otter has taken the dog down with him?"

"Yes, sir," replied one of the men; "he had him by the nose in an instant, and down they both went; but there he is again," pointing to where the little canine hunter was to be seen a few yards higher up the river, shaking himself, his courage, doubtless, not increased by the submersion he had undergone.

By this time, however, old Morgan having succeeded in getting his hounds well settled to the scent, they had driven the otter into the lower water, which was much interspersed with rocks, and where we were better able to form a judgment as to the size of the animal that had already defied us for more than nine hours.

"You'll have the laugh at 'em, sir, when you get home," said the old huntsman; "it's a dog-otter, and a big one too—the bitch isn't far off; but they'll have him directly. Hark to Brilliant!" screamed

the old man, wading up to his middle in the water, and, cap in hand, cheering on his old and well-tried favourite. "She'll never let him rest—there he is, up again!" giving a view holloa that would have done honour to a nobler-looking but decidedly not better pack. I could now plainly see that our exertions were likely soon to be crowned with success, the otter showing evident signs of distress. Besides, he no longer had a large and deep pool in which to dive, and thus elude his pursuers.

A more joyous moment could not well be imagined, what with the wild nature of the scenery and the excitement of the chase. Each rock was as slippery as glass, and afforded no footing to the dogs, who, one and all, pressed forward to be present at the death of the arch-destroyer of the finny tribe.

"Whoop!" shouted Morgan, as, floundering among the rocks, he at last succeeded in extricating his prize from the ruthless jaws of the pursuers. "Whoop!" he cried, as, surrounded by the pack, he bore in triumph, high aloft, the trophy he had so well earned. "There's an otter for you, sir," he said, as, breathless from exertion in crawling up the bank, he laid on the ground the still breathing animal, the effect of whose venomous bite was already percep-

tible upon the cheeks of two of the hounds, their heads having swollen to twice their natural size. "That's the biggest otter that I ever saw, measuring four feet from the nose to the tip of the tail, and is fit to grace any gentleman's hall."

"And so it shall, Morgan," I replied, delighted that, in spite of all that my friends could say to the contrary, I had never deserted the old man. "That memento of your untiring exertions shall have a place in the hall of D—— Park. What weight is he, Morgan?"

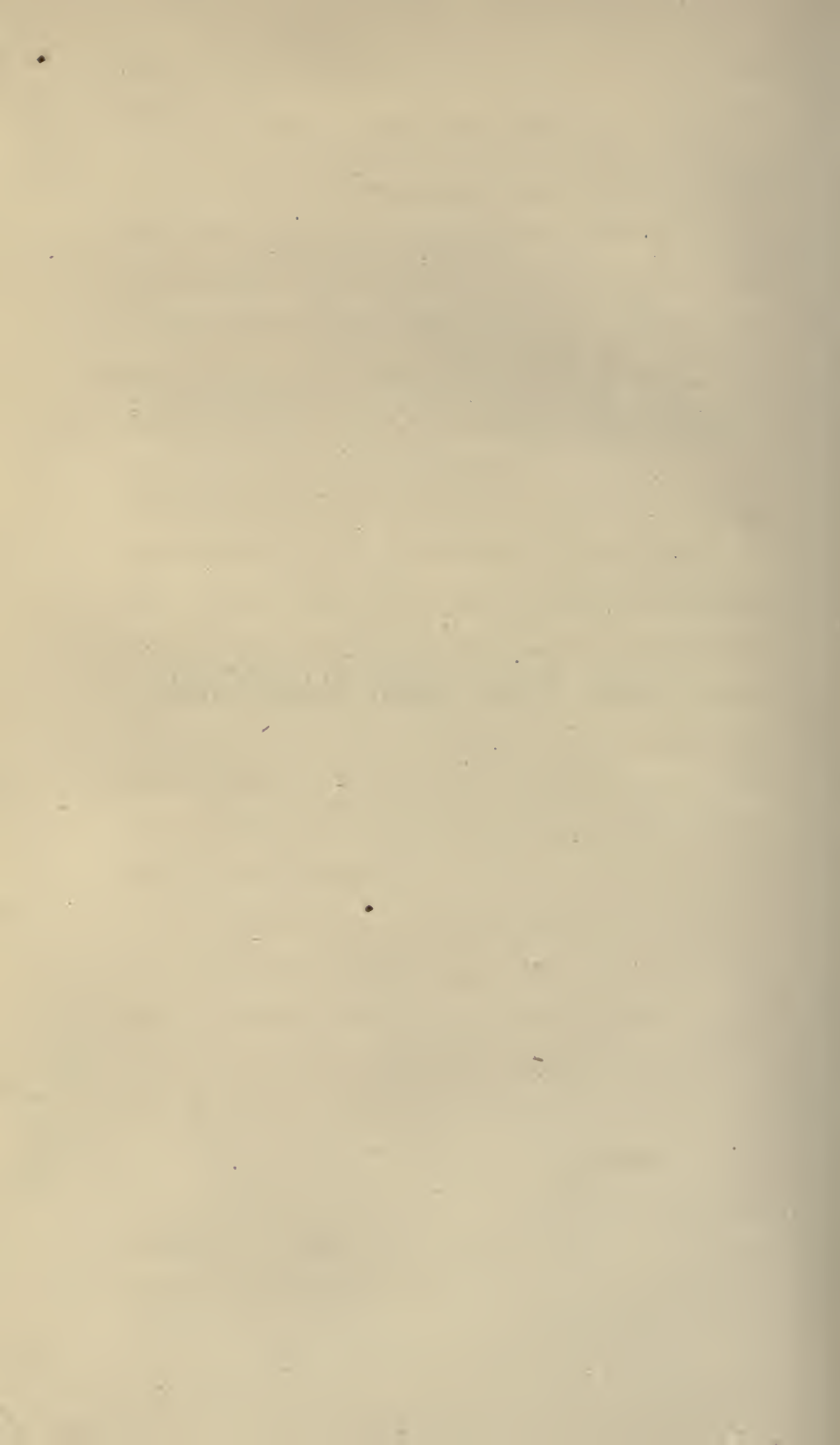
"Twenty-eight pounds, if an ounce," replied Morgan, watching the animal as it gave its last gasp. "Now, sir, what do you say, the bitch isn't far off—shall we try for her? It isn't five o'clock."

"No, Morgan," I replied; "for if she was to lead us such a dance as we have already had, it would be midnight ere I reached the castle. I am proud enough to have that fine fellow to take home. We shall now make for the village of Bronllys, where we will have something to eat, for neither you nor I have tasted anything since three o'clock this morning; added to which, the dogs show signs of having had enough of work for one day."

Loth, indeed, was Morgan to quit the river side ; and not before I had granted my consent to his trying the same water on the morrow, did he call his hounds off. We then started for the village, where, after a hearty but homely repast, I re-mounted my horse, and, with the otter before me, rode off for the residence of my brother-in-law.

It was my first day's otter-hunting, and not a little proud was I as, wet and covered with mud, I flung the animal on the floor of the billiard-room, where all my companions of the morning were assembled.

A GOOD RUN WITH HARRIERS.



A GOOD RUN WITH HARRIERS.

ONE of the best runs that I ever witnessed with a fox was whilst pursuing the less noble sport of hare-hunting; and it was with my own hounds—as pretty a little thirteen couples as ever were turned out—who that day gained a name for themselves as “stickers,” which has rarely been surpassed. I had that morning (it was the first week in the month of November) killed one hare on Mynydd Eppynt, a wild range of moorland in Breconshire, extending some eight miles above Llangoed, where I then resided, to the town of Builth, and was in the act of beating for another, when the entire pack went off at score, running nearly mute, a remarkable thing for harriers. For a moment I thought that “puss” had been “viewed away,” and expected the usual round and round gallop that accompanies hare-hunting; but such was not the case, for on they went, down wind, too, at a pace surpassing that which I was

accustomed to witness, and with nothing to stop them but heather, one vast track of moorland lying before them.

"I never saw hare run so straight as this," said my man, galloping up to my side—"why, sir, I can hardly hear them; they viewed her away, I suppose."

"I know not," I replied, "scarce a hound opens; they are lamentably deficient in music this morning. What a pace they are going at!"

For at least five miles they had kept the mountain ridge, running at the same speed, when suddenly the pack, turning to the right, appeared to be making down for the enclosed grounds bordering on the broad and rocky river Wye.

"They're making for Capel Althmaur, sir," said my man; "you may hear them now as they rattle her through yon big wood. Hark to Lofty!—never did I see hare run so straight."

"We must have changed our hare," I replied; "but look at them—they're making for the river; they have crossed the turnpike road already."

"And they'll cross the river too, sir. I believe we shall never catch them if they do. See! they're in."

"That's no hare," I replied, jumping a small

stake-bound fence, which alone separated me from the turnpike road, and closely followed by my man Williams. "We must make for Builth bridge; there's not a ford between this and the town."

"We shall never see them again, sir; they're making for Aberredw rocks—we shall never see them again!"

Without giving any reply, I made for the turnpike road, which, running parallel with the river, afforded a splendid view of the pack (then giving forth sweet music) as they crested the towering rocks which overhang the lovely river Eddw."

"There they are, sir, crossing the Castle Tump, Snowball, as usual, leading them. Hark to Snowball! Go it, my little beauties!"

"We shall never catch them, Williams," I said; "we have now two miles to go before Builth bridge is made; we cannot keep up this pace much longer."

I had hardly ceased speaking, when "tally-ho!" echoed from rock to rock, given by one whose voice was well known to me. "Tally-ho!—tally-ho!" again broke upon our ears.

"That's Tom Pugh, of Blanmilon, for a hundred," I said. "I thought it was a fox; we have got our work cut out. On, on, for Builth!"

All this time we could hear the pack in full cry, the scent apparently lying breast high ; and only as we neared the bridge, which unites the counties of Brecon and Radnor, was all sound lost.

Crossing the bridge, it took us but little time to clear the village of Llanelwedd, when, turning up a lane, I made for Blanmilon, the residence of Mr. Thomas Pugh, than whom a better fellow never breathed, and who was himself owner of a small pack of rough but steady hounds. His servant told me that his master, having viewed the fox, and being mounted, had followed the hounds, and that four or five couple of his dogs, which ran loose about the house, had joined mine.

"He looked uncommon fresh, sir," said the man, in answer to my inquiries whether or not the fox was nearly down ; "he carried his brush high in the air. Where did you find him, sir?"

"Close to Llangoed, and not a check have we had," I replied.

"Well, sir, it's good that they have got young master with them ; he knows the country well. They're making for the Hundred House ; but follow the lane, it will bring you to Hungry Green."

Thanking him for the information he had given us,

and delighted to find that the few moments taken up in conversation had wonderfully revived our horses, we followed the track specified, but without a sound to guide us on our way.

After ten minutes' rapid galloping, however, which saw the enclosed grounds left behind us, I found that we were entering on the wild waste rejoicing in the name of Hungry Green, where, to my delight, I saw in the distance a drove of black cattle coming towards us, which soon afterwards we met.

"Did you see the hounds?" I said, addressing two men somewhat in advance.

"See them!—I should think so; why, they're five miles on a-head by this time—the fox is just afore them; there's only one man with them, and they'll soon shake him off," replied one of the drovers.

"Which way were their heads set?" I inquired.

"Why, man," answered his mate, somewhat impertinently, "I should say for Llanbadarn Garreg."

"Why, Llanbadarn Garreg is eight miles from here," I continued.

"I know it is—every inch of it," he said; "and it strikes me they'll not catch him until they get to the Devil's Bridge."

Half angry at the man's impertinent manner, and much vexed at finding that the pack was so far ahead, I again put spurs to my horse, and accompanied by my servant, galloped along the well-beaten track by which the Cardiganshire cattle crossed that part of the county of Radnor on their way to the great fair of Barnet.

Few and far between were the human beings that we met on that cold and cheerless waste, and their answers to our inquiries were as unsatisfactory as could well be imagined. What to do, I knew not. If we continued to follow the track we were on, we might perchance find that we were lengthening the distance that separated us from the pack; whilst, on the other hand, we had no certainty that the truth had been told us as regarded their pointing towards Llanbadarn.

“I will tell you what must be done, Williams,” I said, pulling up my horse; “one of us must continue along this drove road, whilst the other strikes off in the direction of the Radnorshire beacons—find them we must, for they have run altogether out of their own country.”

Little time was lost in deciding which of the two should undertake the difficult task of crossing the

deep and wooded dingle at the bottom of which flowed the rocky little river Eddw. It fell to the lot of my servant, who professed to know the country better than myself.

My man once away, I again continued at a rapid pace my search after the missing pack. Mile after mile was completed without a sound to indicate their whereabouts. It was now four o'clock, and thirteen miles at least was I distant from my home, when I fancied that I heard the sound of a hound's voice. I listened and found that such was the case. With renewed hope I pressed forward towards the lonely inn called the "Hundred House," where I was informed of the truth of the drover's statement. The pack had passed an hour before. Determined to find, if possible, the hound I had heard give tongue, I struck off to the right. Success attended my efforts. That hound, however, did not belong to me. It was evidently one that had joined my pack, and which, from lack of speed, had been left behind.

Satisfied that I was now on their track, I suffered the old, worn-out dog, who from time to time would pick up the scent, to have his own way, and through him at last was brought to a spur of the hill, where I could distinctly hear the pack still in full cry.

Forgetful of the old dog's services, I again pressed forward, and after a ride of ten minutes found myself once again with my hounds, which I had for two hours entirely lost sight of.

"We'll try back a bit," said my friend Pugh; "they made it good to yonder knoll. Yoick!—recover again—he can't last much longer—what a run I have had! Where did you find him?"

After telling him how by accident I had come across him in the open, I was about to narrate different particulars, when Snowball, ever a leading hound, hit off the scent, which being immediately taken up by the whole pack, we started off again, at a pace which proved far too quick for both of us, my horse more especially being nearly done up.

"Keep with them, Pugh, if you can!" I cried out, his steed apparently still having something left in him. "I should like to kill that fox—it will be a memorable day with me."

"All right, old fellow," he replied, dashing forward. His horse's hocks every now and then were embedded in bog, whilst mine, who had lost a hinder shoe, began to show evident signs of "shutting up" altogether. "Tally-ho! tally-ho! tally-ho!" he cried, looking back, and pointing with his whip where I

could plainly see the fox some forty yards a-head of the pack.

“Tally-ho!” I repeated, as, ramming the spurs into my horse, I did my best to witness the finish of one of the longest runs I had ever known with harriers; but to no purpose were my exertions—the noble animal was done, and at a foot’s pace I followed, finally coming up with my friends under the brow of a hill, where I found them in the act of severing the “varmint’s” head from his body, prior to his being broken up; and if ever hounds deserved their prize, my little pack did *that* day.

“What a pity you were not with me, Stretton,” said my friend. “I have had many a run from Aberreddw rocks, but never such a one as this. I happened to be at the blacksmith’s when your hounds crossed the river. It was I who first ‘tallied’ him; you see your little pack is somewhat enlarged.”

“I knew your voice, and felt glad,” I said, “being assured that you would join them. As for myself and my man, we had to ride round by the bridge; there is one of your hounds back yonder.”

“Oh! never mind him—my dogs are all on board wages; he’ll find his way home. It strikes me that you had better take a bed at my house to-night;

your horse is completely done. I can kennel up your dogs—there never was any lack of ‘pabulum’ for man or beast at Blannilon; but you knew the old house in my father’s time.”

“Ay, did I,” I replied, “and never was there a better man, or a more thorough sportsman, than Justice Pugh. I accept your offer with pleasure. It would indeed be late ere I reached my home, did I do otherwise.”

The approaching darkness, accompanied with a slight drizzling rain, now warned us to make for home, and notwithstanding that two or three couple of hounds were missing, I called my dogs, and retraced my steps towards the Hundred House, my friend acting as “whipper-in” on the occasion.

Having comforted each of our horses with a bucket of gruel, and ourselves with a glass of brandy and water each, we once again turned our horses’ heads towards the more hospitable neighbourhood of the town of Builth, the only pleasurable association I carried with me from Hungry Green being that of the extraordinary run which that day had fallen to my lot.

A POACHING ADVENTURE.

A POACHING ADVENTURE.

IF in early youth there is a vast amount of pleasure to be found in building castles in the air, surely the memory of the past in our declining years is equally fraught with enjoyment. To me there is nothing more delightful than suffering the mind to dwell upon past sporting days ; to conjure up the forms of those that I have loved and lost, the companions of my pleasures ; to linger over a good day's run, or on one that has become memorable from affording a more than usual amount of excitement, as when, with rod in hand, I made my most successful onslaughts on the finny tribe. How often do I call to my remembrance the pride with which, on the first day when, with an eighteen-foot rod, I made my *début* as a salmon fisher, I returned home with a brace of salmon at my back ; or my otter-hunting days, when at break of morn I was to be found upon the bank of some well-known brook in the Principality of Wales. Yes, those were

happy days, and yet I know not to which season to adjudge the palm, so equally has Providence measured out the pleasure to be derived at different periods from varied and active amusements.

I have said that I know not to which sport I would give the preference. Certain, however, it is that the position in which a man is placed, or the state of his purse, must have much to do in determining whether in after-life he shall prove a first-rate rider to hounds, a good shot, or an adept at the gentle art. The two last-named amusements are, indeed, by far the least expensive ; and thus, I suppose, it has happened that I have not seen so much of hounds as I might otherwise have done, and have been forced for *my* recreation to fall back upon the dog and gun.

How well do I remember the eve of my first appearance at the covert side, when, sauntering into my bed-room at my tutor's house, I saw my scarlet coat, my leathers, and my boots all neatly arranged by his man-of-all-work, and everything in readiness for my morning's triumph, as I anticipated. With what anxiety I listened to the closing of the last door, that sound which proclaimed my tutor to have retired for the night, when, without fear of disturbance, I might give to the tails of my new garment a

semblance of having done some duty. Verdant, indeed, must I have been to imagine that I could give myself something of the appearance of a veteran in the field by staining my coat-tails with ink and water.

It was with the East Kent hounds that I made my first appearance in the hunting-field; and a famous day we had—at least, so I was informed; but, to tell the truth, despite the good hunting qualities of my horse (a hack which I had hired from the stables of Mr. Rimell, of Bond Street), I had sundry and very awkward falls, which appeared to cause no little amusement to a somewhat large and aristocratic field.

Yes, I think I see myself, as, having put up my horse, on my return, at the “Saracen’s Head” inn, I strolled in hunting costume about the little town of Ashford, where I was studying with a clergyman, one who was in no ways strict as to my choice of amusements, but with whom I did not long remain, an accession of fortune soon after rendering the duties of tutor no longer incumbent upon him.

It was also whilst sojourning in that part of Kent that I was first initiated into the pleasures attendant upon the use of the gun, my instructor being no other than a tinker who lived in a lane near our house, without exception the greatest poacher that I ever met with.

It was the second week in October, I remember, that, according to arrangement, I stood at the door of Bill Sykes's comfortless dwelling, whose dilapidated shutters totally failed to obscure the light which plainly told that the poacher was early astir. Tapping gently at the door, a smothered growl fell upon my ear. This I knew emanated from one of the numerous curs kept by the tinker. The salutation at the time I thought anything but encouraging; nor did I feel more confident when I heard the coarse voice of the poacher, as, ordering the brute from the door, he raised the latch to admit of my entering.

"You are true to your time, young sir," said Sykes, wiping the seat of a chair with his leather apron; "the clock has only just struck four. Swinford Holt is but an hour's walk; the keepers will be all on 'em down at the Hall to-day; they have no end of great folks at the big house. You have seen that 'ere thing afore, haven't ye?" pointing to the stock of an air-gun which rested against the wall; "that there tool don't bark—he does his work quietly."

Acknowledging that I had before seen the questionable implement of death, but denying that I had ever seen it used, I began to argue the point as to its

legality, and to speak of the consequences that might ensue should we be caught; especially myself, as I was the possessor of a certificate, and was sufficiently up in law to know that an action for trespass was all that I had to fear, the penalty of which would amount to two pounds.

To me it was a mystery how a man so well known as Bill Sykes was, could have carried on his lawless depredations for so long a time, without being sent out of the country. The numberless convictions that he confessed to were beyond belief, and yet at no time during the season was the house devoid of game. In the day-time, it is true, he was generally to be seen following his lawful avocations, trudging by the side of an invaluable donkey, and accompanied by a remarkably intelligent and good-looking lad, by no means the counterpart of his father, than whom a more villainous-looking mortal could not well be imagined.

“Don’t ye be alarmed about the keepers—I know where they be to-day—they shot Swinford last week—nobody will interfere with us. A brace of long tails and a hare, I think you said you wanted? I think as how you might as well leave that ’ere gun behind you—it is quite safe here” (which, by-the-by,

I rather doubted), "nobody will touch it. I always carries the key with me; and I guess that no one will attempt to enter the house whilst them two dogs are left in charge," drawing my attention, as he spoke, to two ill-favoured curs, one of which was half lurcher, half bull-dog, whilst the other showed unmistakable signs of having something of the pointer in him.

To this unheard-of request, I replied by a decided negative, having made up my mind to shoot myself, with which intention I had actually become the possessor of a brace of good-looking dogs that Bill Sykes had procured for me, and for which I had paid a sum far beyond their value.

"And pray what am I to do with my dogs, Sykes? I want to have a day's shooting. It is true that I require some game; and you told me that you could take me where I should be perfectly safe, and you could ensure my having it. No, no, Sykes, the dogs must accompany me."

"Well, well, sir, no offence," he replied; "bring 'em along, bring 'em along; although I have an idea that this here," putting the barrel of the air-gun into one pocket, whilst the other received the stock, "will do more execution than your 'Westley Richards,' as you calls it."

Telling his two dogs, which had risen from the ground on seeing their master about to move, to lie down, he gently opened the door, and began with some degree of anxiety to peer up and down the lane.

"Strange," he said, "that Bill has not yet returned; but never mind, sir, come along." Then locking the door, the key of which he hid in the thatch, he beckoned to me, and we started at a rapid pace up the lane.

In answer to my questions as to what had become of his son, he told me that he had been out all night on a little business of his, but that he expected to meet him every minute.

"Clever lad that boy of mine, sir," said Sykes, a hideous smile passing over the countenance of the poacher; "that 'ere boy can see a hare on her form a mile off; but it would do your heart good to see the way he sets his wires—by-the-by, you haven't got any old kid gloves about you?—we always wear gloves when a-wiring—hares and rabbits are uncommon nice in the smell."

Telling Sykes that I would endeavour to satisfy his wants, I expressed a wish to know a little more of his son, and of the art of wiring in which he was so expert.

"Why, sir," he replied, "in wiring, you know, there are two sorts—there's wiring in hedgerows, and

wiring in the open. You may perhaps think it an easy job, but I tell you, sir, it's a hart; one man may set a lot of wires along a run, and not catch a rabbit, whilst another will make every wire tell. Then again there is a different height for them and hares. It's a great hart, sir, and requires practice; that 'ere boy is perfect in his wokation, I assure you."

I will not, however, trouble the reader with the lengthened description that I had to listen to on that one subject, although to me it would have been highly interesting, had the poacher been capable of expressing himself with greater facility, but will at once state that within an hour's time I found myself ascending a steep and narrow lane, which, to all appearance, led to a wood.

"You must keep them dogs well into heel," said Bill Sykes, in a low voice; "one on 'em chases like a greyhound; and if a rabbit jumps up they'll both be off. I wish you hadn't brought 'em."

"Oh! I'll keep them back, Sykes. But what do you mean by saying that you wish that I had left my dogs behind?—how are we to find game without dogs, I should like to know?"

A supercilious grin passed over the countenance of the poacher as he said,

“I can do it ; and have killed more game than you ever saw.”

For a few moments we walked on in silence, until we suddenly stopped short at a gate which led into a turnip field. The poacher requested me to get over it, stating his wish to reach the upper part of the wood as soon as possible. For some time we walked side by side, skirting the hedge which separated the field from the covert. Then suddenly again stopping, Sykes gave a low whistle, which was almost immediately answered, and in the same smothered tone. “All right,” growled my companion, as in silence we continued our walk, until we reached a stile, over which he sprang.

“You will keep quiet for a bit here, sir,” said Sykes, taking my gun, and thus allowing me greater freedom in assisting my dogs over the barrier. “Yet, there’s no one about, I think, and there isn’t a farmhouse within half a mile of us. Now, sir, I was a-thinking that before we began to shoot we might as well make sure of our bag. Mind, keep them dogs well to heel. But first of all, with your permission, we will go and see what the young ’un has done.”

“Then it was to your boy that you whistled?” I

exclaimed ; “ why, what has be been doing here ?—has he been out all night ? ”

“ He has ; and you’ll see that he has not been out all night for nothing ; that ’un will keep the pot boiling when his father is past work. I always said to my old woman that education was better than money ; there’s not a trick that he’s not up to, from tickling trout to shooting pheasants. His poor mother was clever—she was uncommon partial to the boy.”

Resuming our walk, which was again carried on in silence, in about five minutes we came to a part of the wood where the undergrowth (day having now broken) appeared to increase in thickness, and where there were no paths. The runs, however, gave strong proofs that rabbits abounded in that locality, which I soon found to be the case, for it was with the greatest difficulty that I could keep my dogs “ to heel.” So restless, indeed, were they, that I wished I had taken the poacher’s advice, and left them behind.

“ I told you, sir, that it would have been better to have left the dogs behind. I can do all that you want.”

“ Sykes,” I replied hastily, for I was getting annoyed, what with the delay in seeking his boy, and

the trouble attendant upon my two brutes, "find the game if you can, and let us get into the open. I want to have some shooting, I tell you. Why not try the turnip-field?—it ought to hold three or four covies."

"We'll try that field by-and-by, young gentleman; but don't ye see them turnips are wet? The birds are on the feed now—don't you hear 'em calling? I just want to speak to my boy—deuce take the lad, I can't make out what has kept him from home all night."

"Well, then, go on—I will follow," I replied, in no very enviable humour. Then following my guide through the brush, which was momentarily increasing in thickness, we continued our course for about five minutes, when the same low whistle was repeated by the poacher, which instantly drew forth a similar reply. A few seconds afterwards we were on a bank thickly covered with blackberry bushes, under which lay crouched up, with his ear to the ground, the hopeful son on whose education Bill Sykes had so largely expatiated.

"What the devil has kept you here, you young whelp?" growled the father. "I told you to be back before break of day. And where's Ned?"

“Gone, father, two hours ago,” replied the boy, in frightened accents. “Some of the keepers were in the wood in the morning, and he said that he wasn’t going to be taken, not for you, or the best man living; and I was afraid to go home without the rabbits, and daylight coming on, so I stowed them in the old place, intending to wait here until nightfall.”

“Poor boy!—pretty education!” I said to myself.

“Well, lad, what did you get?” inquired the father.

“One hare, and three couples of rabbits,” replied the son, his face assuming a different expression on his father’s altered tone.

“Well, then, get them home, boy,” continued Sykes. “I’ll mark Ned for this, the snivelling cur! Get thee home. The rabbits I will look after. The key you will find in the old place.”

Now, fortunately for young Sykes, I had provided myself with a plentiful supply of sandwiches, and a flask of brandy, on the production of which I had the gratification of seeing the half-famished lad make a tolerably hearty meal ere he returned to his lonely and comfortless abode.

There was an air of respect in the lad’s bearing

that, as he touched his hat on leaving, pleased me much, added to which his countenance was, if not decidedly handsome, very interesting; his eyes bespeaking his gypsy blood.

“He'll not be long in getting home,” said Sykes, watching his boy as he made his way down the bank at a pace by no means indicative of that fatigue which might have been expected in one who had passed a night of toil and watchfulness. On he went at the same rapid rate, the eyes of the father following him until lost to sight. “I will just have one look to make sure the young 'un has stowed the rabbits safe,” said Sykes, climbing up the bank, and with some difficulty making his way through the blackberry bushes. “All right—all right,” he continued. And so they were. But even the practised eye of the poacher would have failed to detect anything, had it not been the one spot he invariably used when anything untoward occurred. “Now, sir,” said Sykes, with an air of importance, “I think we had better make sure of what you want; the young 'un has got a hare, a long tail or two I think I can manage in the wheat-stubble adjoining the turnips—keep them dogs, sir, well into heel—there are plenty on 'em feeding t'other side of the hedge, only you

keep quiet, and keep your dogs back." Here Sykes thrust both hands into his capacious pockets, from one of which he drew forth the stock, whilst from the other he produced the barrel, which having put together, he said, with a chuckle, "You shall see something!—you shall see something!"

Step by step, scarcely allowing ourselves to breathe, we approached the hedge which separated the wood from the wheat-stubble before alluded to, when, suddenly dropping on one knee, and motioning to me to do the same (which, by-the-by, I had the greatest difficulty in doing, my dogs having got the scent of game), the poacher raised his piece to his shoulder, and—need I say it?—a cock-pheasant was the result of his unerring aim.

That was the first time that I saw an air-gun used.

"It's a beautiful three-year-old bird," said Sykes, pointing to the white ring round the neck. "I like ring necks. Squire J——'s birds are most on 'em that sort; but why he should introduce the 'pies' I can't make out. Why, sir, any one can see them on the roost. But we'll have another yet—there are more feeding the other side of the hedge."

"No, no," I replied, beginning to feel excessively

nervous, "we will now go and try for some partridges. I want to have some shooting."

"Very well, sir, come along; but the day is young yet, and we might make a nice little bag in this corner."

Here the call of the partridges became so loud and continuous, that I determined, in defiance of all that Sykes should say to the contrary, to beat the wheat-stubble at once.

"Let me just plant this piece of mine, for they might pounce on us, and then——"

"Ah, that's right, Sykes, do put that gun of yours away," I replied; "it makes me nervous, and I have no wish to have three months at the tread-wheel."

Retracing our steps, we sought the spot where the poacher's son had deposited his rabbits, to which the poacher himself now added the pheasant and his gun, the stock of which, having detached it from the barrel, he carefully enveloped in a dirty handkerchief, before he consigned both to the same place of safety.

"No danger now, sir—no danger now," said Sykes, replacing my game-bag over his shoulders, which had been that morning so illegally "hansalled." "But should we be axed any questions, you have only to say that I came just to carry this here thing for you."

I'm not beating, you know, sir—I'm not beating."

"All right—all right," I replied, although somewhat at a loss why he should be so very particular, my knowledge of the game-laws, as may be supposed, being somewhat limited.

"Well, sir, we'll now beat that wheat-stubble, and endeavour to drive 'em into the turnips—there will be some pretty shooting then. They are still in the field—don't ye hear them a-calling? Come this way, sir."

"Why, Sykes, you are going from the wheat-field—it lies over there," I replied, pointing in the direction whence we had come.

"That's true enough, sir; but don't ye see that I wants to give the dogs the wind—I always works up wind."

Without daring to inquire in what way lay the difference of beating up or down wind, lest I should show my ignorance, I submitted to be led along, and in ten minutes found myself in the stubble-field, where the dogs, each taking a hedgerow to himself, commenced chasing round the fifteen acre piece at a most furious rate, giving strong indications of having received their education at the hands of a poacher, though at the time everything appeared to me to be all *en règle*.

“But why don’t they try the middle of the field?” I inquired, as a second time, but now both together, they raced round the field.

“Oh! they’ll quarter their ground presently—they wants to make all sure.”

He had barely ceased speaking when a hare jumped up, both dogs chasing, and one actually giving tongue.

“Come back, you brutes!—ware fence!” screamed Sykes, and that so loud as to cause a covey of some fifteen birds to rise, which we marked into the turnip-field adjoining. “Come on, sir, I knows where they be to a yard—we’ll walk ’em up—come on before the dogs get back. I told you, sir, we should have better sport without ’em.”

This to me appeared as somewhat extraordinary; but following the poacher’s advice, I hurried on, my heart beating with over-exertion and anxiety. Once over the hedge and in the turnip-field, I stopped to take breath, Sykes again urging me on, by saying, that the dogs might return and spoil my sport.

“When the birds rise, sir, don’t give ’em a chance; let drive right into the middle of ’em,” said the tinker—“we are close on ’em;” and so we were, for an instant afterwards the covey rose, offering me a splendid shot. Acting up to the advice of my in-

structor, I fired both barrels, dropping, and that by chance, one single bird.

“That’s bad work; but never mind, there’s one down,” said Sykes. “But hold hard, sir, don’t move; load again, perhaps they are not all risen,” seeing me about to rush up, so fearful was I that I might not find my bird. “Here they are again—I thought that shot would bring ’em back.”

And so it proved, for on came my two dogs, tearing through the turnips at the same famous rate, regardless of the birds that they were running up; but as ill-luck would have it, getting on the scent of the one that I had winged, which they caught, and tore to pieces before we could get to them.

“I don’t call them dogs well broken, Sykes,” I said, greatly disgusted; “they chase hares and run up all their birds—I think you have done me in those dogs.”

“Done you, sir? Lord love ye, they are but fresh, sir,” replied the poacher; “they’ll soon tire themselves out. As for chasing—why, some people thinks that an advantage—wait a bit, sir, wait a bit.”

At that moment, happening to turn my head, to my horror I saw two men making straight towards

us, and at a rapid rate. In a moment I perceived that they were keepers, and candidly own that I had a strong inclination to bolt, and would have done so if pride had not restrained me.

"Mind ye say, sir, that ye just met me by chance like," said Sykes, in reply to my expression of annoyance.

"I know not what I shall say," I answered. And little time had I to consider, for in a few minutes the men were up with us. One of them, in an authoritative tone, demanded my certificate, and asked me if I had permission from Squire J—— to shoot upon that ground. Producing my license, I candidly confessed that I had not. Upon this the man, slightly altering his manner, said,

"I must trouble you, sir, for your name and address. As for you, Bill Sykes, I think we have got you at last. We saw you beating for game with that precious brace of curs of yours. You'll hear more from me. Now, the sooner you are off this land the better."

Saying this, the keeper moved away with his companion, without addressing another word to me, and leaving me in a state of mind by no means comfortable.

Of course there was nothing left us now to do but to make the best of our way home, which we did, reproaching one another the entire way. Before noon I was again under my tutor's roof.

"You must have commenced your operations early, Mr. Stretton, that you are so soon back," said my tutor, as we sat over our luncheon. "I hope you had good sport."

"Why—no—no, sir. I only killed one pheasant and a hare. I dropped one partridge, but was not fortunate enough to get it," I replied.

"Not so bad for so young a sportsman, and in so short a space of time," he continued. "But what made you leave off so soon? I told you that I should not expect you back until dinner."

"Why, to tell you the truth, sir, I was warned off by Mr. J——'s keepers."

"Surely you did not go on Mr. J——'s land without permission, Mr. Stretton?"

"I did, sir, and am sorry for having done so," I replied.

"So am I, indeed; for Mr. J—— is a man as liberal as he is exact, and one whose acquaintance I value much. Had you asked for a day's shooting you would not have been denied. I deeply regret

this misadventure. Tell me, Mr. Stretton, did the keepers merely warn you off?"

"No, sir," I replied, the colour rushing to my cheeks, "I was asked for my name and address."

"And of course you gave them correctly?"

"I did so, sir."

"Then you may be sure we shall hear more of this."

Here the subject dropped, and delighted was I to escape to my own room, there quietly to brood over the probable consequences of my rashness.

"There is a man wishes to speak to you, sir," said Job, the footman, and, indeed, factotum of my tutor, as we sat at dinner the afternoon of the day following. "He says he won't keep you a moment."

One look was all I gave my tutor, as, asking permission to quit the table, I rose and went to meet the stranger, whom I found at the back of the house.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I believe your name is Stretton?" said the man, touching his hat respectfully, an act which wonderfully reassured me.

"It is so," I replied.

"Mr. Charles Stretton?" continued the official.

A simple nod was all I gave in answer to this interrogation.

"I trust, sir, that you will think that I have executed this little business in as gentlemanly a way as is consistent with my duty. I should much like to drink your health, sir."

"Oh! yes, certainly," I replied, drawing my purse from my pocket, and giving him a shilling. "But will you have the kindness to tell me what this is?" I asked, holding out the slip of paper he had given me.

"'Tis but a summons, sir—nothing to one like you. Good evening, sir." And the process-server immediately vanished.

That I must have appeared singularly sheepish on my return to the dining-room, the reader may believe. Not a word, however, was spoken until my tutor's wife had retired from the table, when Mr. M——, after sundry attempts at clearing his throat, said,

"Of course, Mr. Stretton, you have received a summons?"

"I have, sir," I replied, handing him the paper.

"Friday I see is the day that you will have to appear," he continued. "I will accompany you—I have no doubt Mr. J—— will be on the bench. It is a matter that concerns me equally with yourself."

Again expressing my regret at my thoughtless conduct, and giving an assurance that the like should

not occur again, I finished the little wine that was in my glass and quitted the room.

Were I to deny that I dressed myself with the most scrupulous attention to externals, the eventful Friday on which, as I thought, I was to be made a spectacle of in a court of justice, I should tell an untruth; for I had formed the idea that appearance might do much, and had acted accordingly.

It was eleven o'clock when my tutor and myself entered the Town-Hall, which we found to be exceedingly crowded, a circumstance which, in my verdancy, I imagined to be entirely on my account. On the bench, amongst the other magistrates, sat Mr. J——, who appeared to recognise my tutor, which I took as a good sign, as far as I was concerned. For about twenty minutes had we stood in the lower part of the hall, while a case of but little importance was being tried, when, to my horror, I heard my name called out in conjunction with that of Bill Sykes. When the crier at the top of his voice exclaimed, "William Sykes—Charles Stretton, answer to your names," I, who up to that moment had been standing by my tutor's side, and chatting as if there was no trouble in store for me, scarcely dared to look Mr. M—— in the face.

"Good God!" he ejaculated; "Charles Stretton—

William Sykes! Come with me," he said, forcing his way through the crowd, his arm locked in mine. When we reached the bar in front of the magistrates, which answered for a dock, and where my friend the poacher was already standing, an intimation was given me that I was to take a seat nearer the bench, a circumstance which much disconcerted Sykes, who was thus left the observed of all observers, his remarkable attire attracting the attention of the whole court.

I have before said that the tinker was singularly ill-favoured ; and his appearance was by no means improved by the costume which he wore on this occasion. Round his neck was a large red kerchief, the ends of which were hid under a double-breasted red and blue plush waistcoat, rendered more outrageous by the four rows of glass buttons which were attached to it. His coat was of an old Newmarket cut, and had once, doubtless, graced the back of a patrician. His white hat had a remarkably small brim, and while he held it in his hand he made it play over the bar of the dock with the precision of a clock pendulum.

Our little affair, however amusing it might have proved to the majority of the court, occupied the magistrates but a very short time. I pled guilty to the act of trespass ; whilst Sykes fought his own

battle with a degree of cleverness and good-temper that convulsed the court, and no doubt was the cause of his escaping the fine in which I was mulcted.

My tutor, who had taken up a position close to where I was standing, immediately paid the fine, and requested me to accompany him home. Before we could depart, however, an intimation reached us that our presence would be agreeable in the magistrates' room, to which we instantly repaired, and where, instead of black looks, nothing but merriment was perceptible on the faces of the county magistrates, more especially on that of the man on whose land I had been a trespasser.

"How are you, Mr. M——?" said Mr. J——, with an expression as comical as could be imagined. "I took the liberty of sending for you in order that I might ask you and your young friend to do me the pleasure of dining with me to-day. You will meet a few friends of mine—a bachelor's party—a bachelor's party. Will you do me that pleasure, Mr. Stretton?" holding out his hand, which I readily took. "I fear I cannot promise you the presence of Mr. Sykes——"

"Spare him, spare him, Mr. J——," interrupted my tutor, convulsed with laughter, as indeed were all except myself, my endeavour to join them having

grievously failed, so thoroughly did I feel ashamed of myself. "We will do ourselves the pleasure," he said, patting my shoulder with his hand. "At half-past six, I presume."

"Oh, yes, the same hour ; and mind, Mr. Stretton, that you put in an appearance, for I think that we can make an arrangement for a better day's shooting than your last."

TWO DAYS WITH A NATIVE CHIEF.

TWO DAYS WITH A NATIVE CHIEF.

IN the year 1852, whilst encamped in Forest Creek, seventy-five miles from Melbourne, where I then made one of the five thousand who, with such varied success, sought to get at a little of that gold which I for one had squandered away in my early days with a lavishness approaching to madness, it was my good luck to fall in with one "King Tom," as he was facetiously called, but who, nevertheless, was the acknowledged chief of the Yarra Yarra tribe; a sept which, from frequent intercourse with Europeans, had at that time assumed the less euphonious appellation of "Melbourne."

The man of whom I now write I had heard frequently mentioned as one in whose company the "Whitefoot" was ever safe. I had also been told that he was an experienced hunter, and had been visited by some Englishmen to whom he

rendered great assistance when on their hunting excursions.

I had heard much of the excitement attendant upon kangaroo hunting, and was resolved not to lose so good an opportunity as then presented itself. I therefore made overtures of excessive friendship to my new and dusky acquaintance, whom by chance I met at a shepherd's hut. As he appeared by no means averse, a sort of bargain was struck up between us. In return for the honour of his company and guidance I agreed to give him a blanket, six sticks of twist tobacco, and a bottle of rum—a bargain which the reader will perhaps consider as being rather a one-sided one. When it is stated, however, that the act of giving a glass, and much more a bottle, of spirits to a native, is punishable with great severity (a little “fire-water” having been known to render that utterly debased race perfectly mad, and to cause many to “run amuck”), it may be considered that I was rendering a tolerably fair equivalent for the services the chief was about to confer upon me.

My friend, however, was not of that class which delighted in such excesses. Perhaps—I do not mean to say that it was so—his dignity stood in the way of any over-indulgence. At any rate, having fre-

quently mixed with the different European races which constituted the singularly motley population, and which had already rendered the pristine quiet of that lovely forest horrid from excesses too foul to dwell on, it was solely from their example that he had learned to love the pernicious fire-water to the extent that he did.

The costume of my new acquaintance—the man with whom I had made up my mind to try my hand at kangaroo stalking—was somewhat primitive, consisting simply of a blanket, and an attempt at a “Comboy,” a brass plate hanging from his neck completing his attire. As for his head, it required no other covering than his own long and thickly-matted hair.

The tribe to which Tom belonged was encamped about five miles from Castlemaine, the name by which that once lovely and secluded spot, now a populous township, is designated. I had been told that, “*barring* the dogs,” I had nothing to dread in visiting them, should I be fortunate enough to possess the acquaintance of their chief. I preferred, however, avoiding any risk, and therefore made an appointment to meet Tom on an early day, at an easy distance from the place where my party was then working.

“White feller keep word with black feller,” said

Tom, showing his great white teeth, the sight of which caused a slight temporary shudder to run through me. I was thoroughly aware that the aborigines were by no means wholly weaned from their love of human flesh, as the extraction of the kidneys of their slain foes attested. "White feller give black feller blanket, baccy, fire-water?"

"Yes, Tom," I replied, "white feller give blanket, rum, and baccy. Now, tell me, when will Tom meet white feller? Black feller know Dead Man's Gully?"

"Yes, black feller know um gully well," said Tom, pointing to the sun, which was shining brilliantly, and tapping three times the fore-finger of his left hand with that of his right. "Blanket!—baccy!—rum!" he repeated, laying, to my fancy, a strong emphasis upon the last article, and at the same time fixing his large dark eyes full upon mine, as if to test the sincerity of my intentions.

Nodding my head, I also pointed to the sun, repeated Tom's movement of the fingers, which he appearing thoroughly to understand, and said,

"Three days—blanket—baccy—rum."

These few words brought our meeting to a close, for, without so much as a grunt, the savage moved away in the direction of the Yarra Yarra

tribe ; whilst I, highly delighted at the prospect of at last having my wishes gratified, made the best of my way to where my party had pitched their tent.

“ Well, mates,” I said, on entering our tent (the word “mate” being the term of friendship invariably made use of by all gold-diggers), “I have seen King Tom, and am going to have a day’s kangaroo shooting with him, and that too in three days’ time—what think you of that?”

A shout of surprise burst from all, each man having some question to put to me relative to one who had attracted so much attention, not only from his boldness in camping near so populous a township as Castlemaine, but also from the audacity with which he had shown himself alone and unarmed amongst the desperate characters by whom we were surrounded.

“Tell us, Stretton,” said my friend Lovell, who, without flattery, was as gentlemanly and as good-looking a man as I have seen, “what sort of fellow is he?—I need not ask, I suppose, whether he is dark or fair, short or tall? Is the rascal really approachable?—and can he be made to understand plain English?—and where on earth did you meet him? Tell us all about him—whether he had his waddy or a spear with him, and whether he was right regally

attired in an old blanket, or defying this brickfielder, which has nigh done us all up, *in puris naturalibus*?"

Laughing heartily at the varied questions which so rapidly emanated from the mouth of my friend, I candidly told him that my sable acquaintance appeared to be a man by no means to be dreaded; that he had really picked up a smattering of our language, which much astonished me; that he might measure five feet six inches, and was about the ugliest specimen of humanity that my eyes had ever rested on.

"I have half a mind to join you, Stretton—and I will, too, by Jove!" said Lovell, rising from the ground upon which he had been lying; "but I don't like the idea of going to their camp—they tell me their dogs are more to be dreaded than the wretches themselves; and each black devil keeps more than one. Why, man, they would worry us white fellows in no time, if their masters have indeed ceased to regale themselves on human flesh."

"Trust me for that, Lovell," I replied, interrupting him; "I am not going to throw a chance away, and intend keeping clear of the lot. I have made an appointment with Tom, who is to meet me at the top of Dead Man's Gully on Friday morning."

“Well, then, I am your man. I should like to have one good turn at the jumping critters. Which is it to be?—rifle or double-barrel; buck, duck, or number two?”

“Double-barrel, of course; and I intend using simply duck-shot. You do as you like,” I replied, highly pleased at having a companion, for there was a disagreeable sensation associated with the idea of being alone with one who had no fear of law, divine or human, and in whose heart no friendly feeling could possibly exist.

“How long do you intend being away?” said Lovell, now thoroughly determined to accompany me; “for I doubt that the houses of call will be few and far between in the district whither we are bound.”

“My original intention, Lovell, was to have simply tried what one day might bring forth in the shape of sport; but now that you have decided to join me, I should say give the chance a fair trial, and make up your mind to leave our friends for two. We may not have such a guide again; the tribe will soon be off for fresh hunting-grounds.”

“With all my heart, old fellow,” my friend replied, turning round and addressing one of our party who had been unanimously selected to act as a

sort of president of our mess. "What say you, Daniels, can I be spared? I do not forget that this is my week for cooking and washing up; but I fancied that young Strange would perhaps take my duties off my hands. I will take his turn whenever it may come round."

"With all my heart, Lovell," said Strange, who was ever ready to do a kindness. "I'll do your work—I'll do your work."

"Well, then," joined in Daniels, "if such is the case, there can be no other objection than the loss of Dick's labour; for you know, Lovell, you are not worth much with the pick and shovel."

This he said smiling.

"Then I am sure," I remarked, "my absence also will cause but small complaint."

"Devil a bit, Stretton; we may miss you, but it will not be on account of the quantity of dust that is minus at the end of the week."

Here all joined in the laugh against me. A few minutes afterwards the entire party of six were seated on the ground, intent on bringing the meal, which I had so summarily interrupted, to an end.

I have said that I was much astonished at finding

an aboriginal of Australia so far advanced in civilization as King Tom. The reader, however, must remember that nothing whatever was known of Port Philip until 1836, when some stock-masters from Van Diemen's Land, noting its beautiful pastures, carried thither large numbers of sheep and cattle, and, in conjunction with Sir Thomas Mitchell, who, I believe, was appointed to make a report, named it Australia Felix.

A town was, of course, speedily commenced on the Yarra Yarra river (as lovely a stream as eye would wish to rest on), and though the site selected was not well adapted for a port, Melbourne became, almost as soon as founded, a flourishing settlement. In 1850 the district had assumed so much importance that it was formed into a separate colony, and the name of Victoria was conferred on it. But the traders and farmers were even then groaning. The tidings from Sydney, five hundred miles distant, where the gold-fields were proving most productive, were drawing all their best hands away, and they could not but be sensible that, if such a drain went on, nothing but ruin was to be anticipated. In order to devise means to keep the people at home a meeting was held, and the sum of two hundred guineas was proposed as a reward to the discoverer of a

gold-field within one hundred and twenty-six miles of Melbourne. They had not to wait long before several such discoveries were made—first at Anderson's Creek, only sixteen miles off; next at Clunes, on one of the head waters of the Loddon, some ninety miles to the north; and then at Ballarat, near that extraordinary hill Boninyon. Such was the rise of Melbourne, which, when I quitted it in 1857, was a beautiful and fast improving city, and, from what I hear, is now, for its years, without a parallel.

For some time the natives were in the habit of entering the newly-formed settlement perfectly destitute of clothing. This, of course, was not to be tolerated, and Government appointed certain persons in different localities to distribute blankets to all who would receive them. To those persons the title of "black-protector" was granted, and great good was caused through their instrumentality.

At that time, 1856, the banks of the Yarra Yarra were the favourite resort of King Tom's tribe; or, perhaps, more properly speaking, of the tribe of his father. For a long time, despite the intruders, they hovered about these beloved hunting-grounds; and splendid indeed must have been the forest which afforded them shelter from the scorching rays of a

December sun, as many of the gum-trees of almost primeval growth, which have escaped the ruthless axe of the settlers, still attest.

But the pioneers of 1836 were wrong when they claimed to be the first of the European race that had put foot upon that favoured spot. There was one who, many years before that eventful period, had seen it in its pristine beauty, and he an Englishman. As he perchance might, in some slight degree, have affected the character of the Yarra Yarra chief, it will not be deemed amiss if I narrate the story that was known to many in Melbourne at the time when I was there. It was as follows:—

In the year 1815, a convict of the name of Barn, or Barnet, I forget which, with two others of the same class, escaped in an open boat from the penal settlement at that time existing in Van Diemen's Land. This man was discovered by the natives, and, strange to say, was first seen sitting on the very spot where the last obsequies had lately been paid to their departed chief, the father of Tom. They, believing, as they certainly do, that the black race will become white in the next world, almost worshipped the Englishman, whom they regarded as the spirit of their departed chief. Perhaps the gigantic stature of the

man, for he was considerably above six feet, might have added somewhat to the awe with which they were affected in his presence. The stranger himself, whose fears were at first naturally roused, soon perceived his power, and joining the tribe, lived with them until 1836, when he was accidentally seen by the stockmasters I have before alluded to, and by them was brought back to Van Diemen's Land. When found, he was totally destitute of clothing. Neither razor nor scissors for that lengthened period had touched his face, or curtailed his thin, hoary, and matted locks by one inch. In his native tongue scarcely a word could be extracted from him; and to the day of his death, which occurred in 1855, nothing could be elicited from him as to the fate of his companions. Despite his assertions (for he recovered the use of his native language) that they had disagreed with him, and had left to seek their own fortunes, horrible suspicions were formed as to their fate. The man received a free pardon shortly after he was brought back to Van Diemen's Land, and a small pension was allotted him, upon which he lived. A narrative of his life was published; but I was not fortunate to procure a copy of it.

But to my story. The two days that intervened ere I was to keep my engagement with Tom were

passed, as usual, in sinking, but with little or no success on my part. Disheartening indeed was it, when I had sunk some eight feet, to find that the man who held the claim adjoining mine was actually undermining me. That he had found gold was certain, and he was following up the lead, which he had a right to do. What could I do in the shape of sinking against a regular "navvy?" With disgust I threw up my claim, and contented myself by digging in the shallow creek, where I considered myself lucky if I succeeded in getting two pennyweights a day of the precious metal.

The morning of the third day broke with every indication of a continuance of the same disagreeable weather. The hot wind which blew from the north, brought with it clouds of the finest dust that it is possible to imagine, a phenomenon which by the colonists is called a "brickfielder." This in some degree damped the ardour of Lovell and myself, for every sportsman is aware how wild all game becomes in windy weather. The thermometer stood, the day previous at noon, at 120°, with every promise of remaining for some time at the same height.

"It will be fearfully hot by-and-by, Stretton," said Lovell, cramming some eight or ten chops,

cut from a loin of mutton, into a most capacious game-bag, which already had received boxes of sardines, two quart-pots, and three pannikins, to say nothing of tea and sugar. "You must carry the grog-bottle, beer, &c., Stretton, for I can tell you that my swag will be heavy enough when my blankets come to be added to it."

"All right, Lovell," I replied. "You may depend upon my taking especial care of the rum-bottles, for I candidly confess that I should as much dread meeting Tom without his promised present, as I should facing single-handed the entire tribe, with all their dogs. The savage may bide his time, but revenge he will have eventually, if deceived."

Oh! what a contrast did we present, as we quitted the tent with the good wishes of the party for success, to the sportsmen who may be seen on the Highland moors on the twelfth of August! As for myself, my swag was enormous, for, in addition to my own pair of blankets, I had to carry the large double one which I had purchased for my sable friend.

Thus equipped, we sallied forth in a north-westerly direction, which we kept for an hour and a half, when we found ourselves entering one of those numerous forested spurs which descend from the

broken ranges at the foot of the higher ridges, and bound the valley on either side. Here, far away from the ceaseless noise and hubbub, the dust and filth, the sure accompaniments of a "digging," we saw nature in its purity. With the exception of our voices not a sound broke the deathlike stillness of the gully—for the wind had died away. Birds of the most beautiful plumage sat looking calmly at us as we passed along; but there was so little novelty in them that we only once stopped to regard two exquisite specimens of the parrot tribe—the one all black, with the exception of the breast, which was of a carmine colour, and of the crest, which, falling completely down his back, resembled that of the golden pheasant; the other a large green bird, with scarlet breast and golden topknot. Beautiful as these were, we left them undisturbed; each moment expecting to hear the well-known "koo-ee," a sound so grateful to the ears of those benighted or lost in the Australian bush.

Two hours and a half we had now been walking, and Lovell began to show signs of distrust as to Tom's putting in an appearance that day. It was with some difficulty that I reassured him, by bringing to his remembrance the well-known fact that the Australian aboriginal invariably keeps his word.

“ Well, I believe you are right,” he said, “ only I was thinking that, as the wind has died away, the sooner we are at work the better. Heaven only knows what a dance that fleet-footed black will this day lead us. What think you of camping out the night with him?—they are all awful thieves.”

“ I have no fear, Lovell,” I replied, “ and will take good care that he does not touch his bottle until after our departure ; he will then soon be gloriously drunk, poor wretch ! I feel somewhat ashamed of the transaction ; but what could I do ? ”

It was then arranged that, when we laid ourselves down for the night, each should take his share of watching ; no idea of fear for our personal safety prompting us to that measure, but simply the wish to protect our property.

We had nearly reached the end of the gully, when, to our delight, we found, in the rocky bed of the now dried-up creek, two solitary water-holes. With what gusto did we quaff the filthy liquid, rendered slightly more palatable by that nastiest of spirits, rum. After we had refreshed ourselves, we were in the act of filling our pipes for the third time, when, from a considerable distance, the much-desired “ koo-ee ” broke upon our ears.

“There he is, by all that’s truthful!” said Lovell. “Give him the answer, Stretton—you can give it better than I can.”

Whereupon I commenced a series of koo-ees, to each of which the answering call was given, and, judging from the sound, by one who was rapidly approaching us.

In a few minutes afterwards, to our delight, we could see the sleek black form of Tom, as he emerged from the dense scrub; a very small blanket, or, rather, remnant of one, covering his chest and back down to the knees, and, being open at the right side, leaving his arm at liberty. A few seconds sufficed to bring us together, and when Tom found the treasures he so much coveted actually within his reach, he made no attempt to conceal the delight that he felt.

It was with difficulty that the savage could be restrained from knocking the neck off one of the bottles. We could not make him understand that his own was not for present drinking; neither did he appear at all satisfied when Lovell handed him a pannikin of water-grog. Tom was one who preferred his spirits neat.

It was now drawing on for eleven o’clock, and as

the heat was excessive, we determined to halt for an hour and enjoy an early lunch. That discussed, we should commence the real business of the day. There being no lack of dry wood, a fire was speedily made, the chops were cooked, and ere twenty minutes had elapsed we were sitting down to as good a meal as could be desired. Corks, too, were drawn (for at the diggings there was scarcely anything that money could not purchase).

In reply to our interrogatories relative to the whereabouts of the new species of game at which we were so anxious to try our hands, we made out that in about an hour's time we might expect to see some. We fancied, from his gesticulations, that Tom had already seen some of the larger kind, which we were most anxious to come across, the "old man kangaroo" being a most formidable antagonist either to man or to dog.

Never did mortal enjoy a meal more than our sable companion. Chop after chop found ready access down his ravenous throat. Ever and anon he would turn his head round as if in search of his lubra (wife), to throw to her the bones he had picked so clean, the doubly-degraded wives of that most debased race never eating with their hus-

bands, but patiently sitting behind them, and awaiting with thankfulness the wretched remnants that their lords and masters may deign to throw to them. What their innumerable dogs find to subsist upon, is a mystery, unless by self-hunting. The natives of New Holland will eat anything, from slugs and snakes to the wild dog—but they revel in the former; and when in the summer the supply is plentiful, their skin becomes as sleek as that of a mole, and they lose that attenuated appearance which is the characteristic of the New Hollander.

Our lunch over, and another pannikin of rum and water swallowed, we commenced repacking what was left of our eatables. Finding the weight of our swags to be considerably reduced, we transferred them from our own shoulders to those of our dusky and not unwilling guide.

Once started, half an hour's walk up a tolerably steep hill, densely covered with scrub, brought us in sight of the prairie, which appeared to us to be interminable. The general loneliness of its aspect, too, was rendered doubly lonesome from the want of song among the feathered tribe. Here Tom made a dead halt, and appeared to be for some minutes mentally scanning the vast plain before him. To the eyes of

Lovell and myself, all that lay before us seemed as one great arid wilderness. Not a living thing was to be seen, not even a bird in the air, and the long grass, which would have fed many thousand head of sheep and cattle, resembled one enormous stubble-field. Yet wonderful is the amount of nutritious matter in that apparently dried up and foggy herbage.

Tom was evidently an old hand at stalking; and that his eyes were far superior to ours, aided as we were by an admirable field-glass belonging to my friend, was soon proved.

“Dar!” said Tom, holding out his skinny arm, and pointing in the direction of a small conical rising piece of scrubby ground, the only elevation which broke the monotony of the cheerless waste. “Does white feller see kangaroo?”

Raising his glass, Lovell for some minutes gazed in the direction indicated; but vain were his attempts to discover that which was so palpable to the eye of the savage. I then tried, but with the like want of success, and handing the glass to my friend, shook my head in token of my inability to discover that of which we were in search. A smile, as I fancied, of contempt, passed over the countenance of Tom, as he said,

“Black feller find kangaroo—come.”

In silence for some minutes we followed our guide, who, had he been brought up under one of Scotland's most experienced deerstalkers, could not have commenced his difficult task more systematically. Striking off in a direction nearly diametrically opposite to that in which the game lay, he sought to put the conical stump between us and the herd, as it eventually proved to be ; but what time, what labour, did it cost us to get within gun-shot of the chief species of the pouch tribe.

Descending from the elevated ground, we found ourselves nearly up to the knees in the long entangled grass, through which, for upwards of an hour, we had to make our way on our hands and knees. At times we would be nearly hip-deep in bog, the tenacity of which was so great that it was with the utmost difficulty we could extricate our legs from the black and slimy abomination. As for our guide, he thought nothing of it, divested as he was of covering about the legs, although the weight he carried must have been considerable, having the united swags of Lovell and myself on his shoulders. But no signs of exhaustion, no appearance of suffering from intense heat, were to be discovered in the savage. We

had now for upwards of half an hour made our way in the uncomfortable posture I have described, when my spirits were wonderfully renovated by the rising of a wild turkey, which offered a most inviting shot. In an instant he was covered by both Lovell and myself, but a grunt from Tom warned us not to fire. At that time I was not aware that the sense of hearing in the kangaroo tribe is as acute as the sense of smell in their olfactory nerves.

Rather annoyed as both were at losing so noble a bird, we continued to lessen the distance which intervened between us and the little scrubby mound I have before alluded to, and in another half hour were within a hundred yards of it.

“Stop dare!—lie down!”

The latter words were uttered by Tom in perfect English.

“Black feller go by self—black feller send um.”

Here he unloosened the burden from his shoulders.

Lying quietly down, in obedience to our guide's directions, an act which, to me, was beyond belief gratifying, for the grass on that spot was as dry as any new-made hay, I watched Tom's movements. Then it was that the superiority of the savage was made manifest. He made his way like a snake

through the long and matted grass, at a pace beyond belief.

“Did you ever see anything like that, Lovell?” I said, in a whisper, to my friend.

“Quiet; he is evidently bent on driving something towards us; as for myself, I don’t believe that there is a kangaroo on the whole prairie. I wish we had bagged that turkey. I am sure if Tom could have made one out, I could have done so with my glass. But I rather like this style of thing—I could enjoy a nap, were I on yonder scrubby mound.”

“I have every faith in Tom,” I replied. “You may depend that the ‘black feller,’ as he calls himself, has seen game—*nous verrons*.”

It was now nearly two o’clock, and the heat excessive. Not a breath of air was there; and we both began to look with longing eyes towards the only sheltered spot upon that lonely waste.

“I do not profess to know much about ‘theomotics,’ but what would you say the calorimeter stood now at in the sun?” inquired Lovell.

With difficulty restraining myself from bursting out into open laughter, so tickled was I at my friend’s giving utterance to such high-sounding words, after asserting that he was ignorant of the science of

theomology, I replied that I should calculate the heat at considerably above one hundred and twenty. I added that, if neither Tom nor game of some kind turned up shortly, I should seek the shelter of the scrub and make myself comfortable, feeling tolerably independent now that our provisions were once again in our own keeping.

Lowering my head, which I had partially raised to reply to my friend Lovell, I drew my Panama hat well over my eyes, so as to screen my face from the scorching heat; and allowing sufficient space to enable me to keep a good look-out, in case anything in the shape of *gibier* should show itself, I again laid myself flat on the ground. Not long, however, was I destined to keep that recumbent position, for in less than five minutes a touch on the arm, and the words "Look out!" warned me that Lovell, with the aid of the glass, had seen something.

"Don't you see him, Stretton?" said my friend, handing me the telescope; "he's coming this way—look straight ahead—don't you see him now? See, he's standing up, showing his full height. If we could but get a shot at him!"

Here all conversation was put an end to by the bounding past, at about forty yards' distance, of seven

or eight kangaroos, three of them of large size. Singling out the second in advance, I pulled, and the animal fell; but recovering himself, he started off apparently unhurt. Not a moment was lost in giving him the second barrel, which, I am ashamed to confess, proved an inexcusable miss. My friend, however, was more successful. He had dropped two, and was in the act of loading again.

“What have you done, old fellow?” said Lovell.
“I have knocked two over.”

“Nothing, I am ashamed to say; one fell to my first barrel, got up again, and is off after the others. I missed altogether with my second barrel; but I’m keeping my eye upon him—he cannot go far. I wish we had had a dog.”

“Never mind, old fellow,” he continued; “we have got a brace—come along, let us have a look at them. I never killed a kangaroo before. By-the-by, tell me——”

“Down, by Jove, Lovell!” I said, interrupting him, for I had not once lost sight of the wounded animal, which at that moment I fancied I saw fall. “We’ll have him yet; but it’s difficult to mark, even in the open, if you take your eyes off the spot.”

“You are right, Stretton; but come, I’m all

anxiety to view my prize. I suppose there's no danger, should one or the other of the brutes be only wounded? I have heard of them ripping dogs up with that one fearful claw of theirs; and I am told that they have been known to carry men off to water-holes and drown them. I should think that there is no danger—what say you?"

This he said half in earnest, half in jest.

"Upon my word I know no more than a child about the habits of a kangaroo. I only know that I should be very chary in picking up a wounded bittern; I once nearly lost an eye in the Lincolnshire fens in doing so. I'll risk it, come along. But where on earth is Tom?"

"Oh! he'll be here presently. I wish he was come, for there's plenty of work to be done. I want the skins. Of course you are aware that the haunches are excellent eating?"

"Yes," I replied. "And no soup better than kangaroo tail."

Giving one more look to the spot where I last sighted the wounded animal, I accompanied Lovell to the place where the first killed kangaroo lay. He was quite dead. If not what is called "an old man," he was of extraordinary size, his tail at the but being nearly

as large as the calf of a man's leg. The other, which lay about twenty yards distant, was much smaller, and proved to be a female. She also was dead.

For some little time we stood gazing at the dead animal, scarcely knowing what to do, and anxiously waiting the coming of the black.

"We had better haul her to where the other dead one is, and sit down quietly until Tom comes up—he must be here directly."

"If he does not soon show himself, I will squib my gun off."

"Give him the 'koo-ee,' Stretton, man."

I instantly gave the call, and it was instantly answered. Tom was but a few yards off, squatting by the side of the larger animal. Where he had come from, and how, we never knew.

"Black feller send kangaroo—white feller kill two—three noise."

I at once explained, as nearly as I could, that, at my first fire, the kangaroo had dropped, but recovering himself, had made off towards the scrub, and that I expected to find him dead within a few hundred yards.

"Black feller find him," said Tom.

Although my friend had killed his game, we did

not know what to do with it. As I have before said, the hinder-quarters afford most excellent food, but the fore ones are valueless.

“Let us skin them at once, for I want their coats,” said Lovell, drawing from his pocket a long hunting knife; “and as it is dinner-time, I do not see why we should not have a steak or two from that big fellow’s haunches. I suppose it will be mighty tough; but, as you are aware, all the meat that we eat at our dinners at one o’clock is killed at seven in the morning. We need not, therefore, be too particular as to its excessive freshness.”

Thoroughly acquiescing in all that my friend had said, I hinted that Tom would perhaps prove a better hand at divesting the animals of their hides than either of us; and the black proving perfectly willing, the knife was handed to him. In less than a quarter of an hour the skins were off, and some fine steaks cut; the remainder, with the exception of the tails, being Tom’s perquisite, should he choose to encumber himself with such an amount of fresh provision.

For my part I was anxious to start at once in search of the animal that I had wounded, for I felt my character as a shot somewhat lowered—but in

this I was overruled. Thirst, too, if not hunger, dictated the necessity of a halt. It took but a very few moments to make a splendid fire, so much dried wood being always to be found in the summer months in that country. We were not long in verifying the truth of the assertion that anything cooked immediately after being killed is tender. As for myself, I never enjoyed a dinner more. Lovell's appetite, however, received somewhat of a damper from the sight of Tom swallowing huge mouthfuls of the flesh perfectly raw.

That the savage did not consider his grog strong enough was evident, and many a wistful look did he give at the rum bottle; but we were determined to run no risk, and his bottle was a sealed one until we separated.

For some time we lingered over our dinner, our conversation being immensely enlivened by the quaint answers to questions received from Tom.

"Do you really believe, Tom, that henceforth you will be a white feller?" I asked.

"Yes, black feller die, and rise un white feller; white feller die, he rise working bullock."

Bursting with laughter, we asked the savage to explain himself.

“Why do you think that white fellers will rise working bullocks?” I inquired.

“White feller have good now, black feller by-by; white feller drive black feller away; no hunting ground—no 'possum—no kangaroo—rats come with white feller—black feller die when white come.”

Now there was a great deal of truth in what the poor fellow said; for I had been assured that no rats, and but little vermin, were known in Australia until imported by the shipping; and certainly there is no country which can now exceed it in the abomination alluded to.

Again, how truly did he speak when he said that “black feller die when white come.” Look at Van Diemen's Land. Seven years ago there were seventy-four natives in the island of Tasmania, and they had all been collected and placed in a small island by themselves, Government rendering them every assistance. In a few years they will be extinct.

Dinner over and the things repacked, but not before Tom had cut off as much as he could carry of the flesh, we started in quest of the wounded kangaroo, a task which proved one of no difficulty, so excellent a tracker was our guide. Taking up the trail where the animal had first fallen, he, without

once stopping, brought us to where it lay dead, some seven or eight hundred yards beyond the spot I had last seen him.

I was indeed glad to get the animal, for I felt by no means certain of having another shot that day, neither did I relish the idea of returning to our tent empty-handed.

The third kangaroo, which proved a male, was nearly the size of the larger one killed by Lovell. Its skin differed from that of the others, being much darker.

It was now late in the afternoon, but as both were unwearied, we determined upon following up our sport until darkness should compel us to desist.

"Do you think, Tom, that black feller can find more kangaroo?" I asked.

"Ye-es," answered the nigger, casting unmistakable looks at the little flask I was in the act of putting to my mouth, from which I poured a small quantity into a leather drinking-cup, and handed it to him. "Black feller find 'em 'gain—not far—turkey too, think."

"The very thing we want, Tom," said Lovell. "Let us be off—night comes on suddenly in these parts."

Leaving the carcass where it lay, as food for the numerous tribe of night-feeding animals *feræ naturæ*, we again started in quest of adventure, Tom almost immediately falling in with a trail. Then again commenced the same arduous work of creeping through the long and entangled grass, an operation only varied by an occasional sinking up to the hips in some dreadful bog—which to our guide appeared as nothing. Notwithstanding all this discomfort, it was with immense interest that we watched the rapidity with which he followed up a track which to our sight was perfectly undiscernible.

“Dare,” said Tom, again pointing in a direction straight ahead, after an hour’s crawling and stooping. “Dare, not far off.”

This time, after some little straining of the eyes, and frequent recourse to the glass, we did manage to catch sight of the “jumping critters,” as Lovell invariably called them, apparently the remnant of the herd that had so rapidly passed by us.

“Dare—black feller go—black feller drive.”

Saying this, on crept Tom at the same rapid pace, but in a different direction; whilst we, resuming our crawling position, slowly endeavoured to render the distance less which lay between us and the wariest of

the pouch tribe. Luckily for us, what little wind there was, was in our favour; and thus, for once, we could say that each had gained his shot without further assistance from Tom, for before he had roused the animals from their lair we were upon them. Two that time fell to our guns, and proved to be males of good size.

We had scarcely reached the spot where lay the brutes, when Tom rejoined us. Immediately, receiving the knife from Lovell, he commenced divesting them of their coats. The rest afforded by the time occupied in skinning the kangaroos was to me most pleasurable, I confess, and believe that it was no less so to my friend, notwithstanding his protestations of being "as fresh as ever." Besides, the lengthening shadows now warned us that it was time to look out for some spot whereon to pass the night.

"It will take us some time, Lovell, ere we gain the shelter of the forest, and I propose making for it at once, and, under some friendly primeval tree, lighting our fire; though the days are hot, the first streaks of morning are accompanied with bitter cold. What say you?"

"With all my heart, old fellow; but I intend having some night-shooting with Tom. If you don't

like to join me, you can take your rest. I may not have so good a chance again."

"What you mean by night-shooting, I really cannot understand, being aware that the moon will not rise until four o'clock to-morrow morning. Why, man, it will be as dark as Erebus in two hours' time."

Telling me that in due time I should see his intentions fulfilled, and protesting that he was as unfatigued as when he started, he assisted me in packing up the skins, which being added to the general swag on Tom's shoulders, we started in the direction of the forest.

Nothing could well be more dreary than our walk, which proved a good two hours' stretch over an unvarying arid waste, without a sound to enliven us save our own voices, and that of the most odious of birds, the "laughing jackass." Oh! with what delight did I, on reaching the scrub, throw myself down under a gum-tree of gigantic size, at the same time expressing my determination there to pass the night. With what pleasure did I assist in preparing for our evening meal, whilst Tom was engaged in making up the fire which was to afford us comfort and light during a night as dark as pitch.

There being no lack of fuel, a very few minutes sufficed to get the quart pots on the fire ; and before half an hour had elapsed, we were all three seated at our supper, a meal by no means to be despised, when it is remembered that mutton chops, kangaroo steaks, and sardines were spread out before us, to say nothing of the beautiful potatoes that were gradually roasting in the heated embers. I have no hesitation in saying that, good as the chops were, the kangaroo steaks far eclipsed them, rendered perhaps a little more tasty by a few drops of Lee and Perrin's "Worcestershire Sauce." I have seen much of camping out in the colony of Victoria, but never did I enjoy a night as much as I did the one I passed in company with my friend Lovell and "King Tom." Our supper over, the everlasting pipes were lighted, and the pan-nikins replenished. No fears had we as to our fire going out for want of fuel, for an abundance of dead wood lay scattered about in all directions.

"A nice night you will have for your sport ; and I presume that it is sufficiently dark. If you take my advice, you will remain where you are, and enjoy yourself before that splendid fire."

"Ah ! you may laugh, Stretton," replied my friend ; "but I intend to bag an opossum or two

before I return to you." Then addressing Tom, he said, "Will Tom go with white feller and kill opossum?"

"Ye-es," answered with a grin our dark friend, who showed no signs of weariness, or of a desire for sleep, the invariable custom of the New Hollanders after a hearty meal.

Telling Lovell that I wished him good sport, and expressing my opinion as to his chance of success, I began to make myself comfortable for the night.

For an hour or more we chatted away, and highly amused were we by all we gathered from the black. His description of a fight, and of a "corrobbery," was vastly exciting. He told us that his tribe were about to celebrate the latter prior to their change of ground, and that the white man would be safe as a spectator. I therefore at once made up my mind to be present at their next merry meeting, provided Lovell would accompany me.

"How many suns before 'corrobbery,' Tom?" I said, handing him another pannikin of weak rum and water. "White feller safe with black feller at 'corrobbery?'"

"Ye-es," answered the savage.

"Then we will go, by Jove! Stretton," exclaimed

Lovell, delighted at the idea. "I have heard much of the fun attendant upon these orgies, from one who was an eye-witness. Devils indeed they must appear, bedizened as they will be with raddle and indigo. By Jove! I'll go with you, Stretton; but how are we to find out when this flare-up is really to take place?"

"Get Tom to leave word at the shepherd's hut, the spot where we first met. He either does not know the exact day, or he finds some difficulty in answering my question," I replied.

Turning again to Tom, I asked him if he really knew when the "corrobbery" would take place; and finding that he did not, I gained a promise from him that the desired information should be left at the hut mentioned.

"Well, then," said Lovell, "that being settled, Tom and I will start. So, *au revoir*, Stretton—come along, Tom."

"Plaguy dark you will find it, I calculate," I rejoined.

"Not so murky when away from the glare of that tremendous fire," said Lovell, as he moved away, accompanied by our guide.

"Well," I said to myself "if that is not a wild-

goose chase, I never saw one, and yet there must be something in it, he appears so sanguine; but we shall see."

With my back resting against the trunk of the huge gum-tree, and my face to the fire, which was blazing perhaps too fiercely at the foot of a stringy-bark of no small dimensions, I pleasantly whiled away the time in musing—my thoughts naturally turning towards the beloved ones I had left behind in the old country. How long I had been lost in contemplation I know not, but I was aroused by the report of a gun, fired a considerable distance off. Turning my head in the direction from whence the sound came, I fancied that I could see a fire, and for a time watched it; but the light suddenly disappeared, leaving me full of conjecture as to how my friend was conducting matters. Resuming the comfortable position I had previously taken, I was about to fill my pipe for the last time, when another, and a more distant report, was audible. This time no light was to be seen, and I was more mystified than ever. The second shot was soon followed by a third, and I became very anxious for the return of my friend, so desirous was I of gaining from his own lips an

account of the method he had adopted to shoot on a night of such intense darkness.

For an hour or more I waited patiently the return of Lovell and Tom, but when, upon looking at my watch, I found that two hours had elapsed since I heard the last report, I became nervous, all manner of strange ideas came into my head, and I was on the point of giving the cry of distress, when a distant "koo-ee" echoed through the forest. In an instant that cry was returned, and I waited for an answer; but it was not until five minutes had passed away that I was assured of the safety of the wanderers. I was rejoiced to hear the voice of Lovell, and shortly after both stood before me.

"There!" said my friend, throwing down a brace of opossums. "I ought to have had one more. I told you that I should do something. How dark it was!"

"I should think so," I replied. "Now, do tell me how you managed it?"

"Why, as the Yankees do, who shoot by torch-light; but not having the wherewith to manufacture torches, I raised a fire. Tom could tell in half a minute whether an opossum had treed or not, by

the claw-marks. Talk of trapping!—no red Indian was ever a match for our friend Tom!”

“I always told you so, Lovell. What a sad thought is created, even in the breasts of us erring ones, who have been taught the right and the wrong way, when it is remembered how utterly valueless have been the labours of the missionaries amongst the natives of this vast island—continent, I might call it. ’Tis true that there are a few natives now doing excellent service among the mounted police—of course I allude to trapping—but as to any considerable number of them ever being converted, such will never be the case. They are indeed a benighted race.”

“You are right, Stretton. I believe I am not wrong when I say that the New Hollander is the lowest in the scale of humanity.”

Now, the reader will perhaps consider this as bold talking, in the presence of the chief of the Yarra Yarras; but in this instance there was no danger. Tom was asleep, rolled up like a ball in the blanket that he had so justly earned.

“I wonder if that fellow sleeping so soundly ever dreams,” said Lovell. “It is certain that none of those troubles which at times so fearfully disturb us,

ever break his rest. No care, no thought, no jealousies."

"Hold hard!" I exclaimed, interrupting him. "No jealousies!—by the powers! there is no race on earth that is so much enslaved by that fearful passion as the New Hollander. But not towards the white man—amongst themselves it is excited to a fearful and incredible pitch."

"Then you think there will be no danger in our going to this 'corrobbery?' I can assure Tom that there is no danger of my being smitten by the beauties we are likely to behold. Never was there such a hideous race."

"Well, they are an ugly race, Lovell; but I once saw a girl of thirteen, in Collingwood, as pretty a half-caste as you would wish to look on. Her father was an Englishman. Few Hindoos could surpass her in shape; there was nothing of the nigger's foot or leg about her. She was accompanied by her mother and three of the opposite sex. Poor girl! what a life was in store for her!"

"Did you have any conversation with her?—and where did you meet her, Stretton?"

"It was at the Collingwood Hotel, in Cambridge Street. I lived there for twelvemonths. You re-

member H——, the landlord, who got into that awful scrape? What a fine specimen of an Irishman that man was."

"Oh! you mean the man who had nine months for killing that bullying, blustering blacksmith?"

"The same. But, let me add, the sister kingdom never produced a kinder-hearted or a more generous fellow than the oft-time called murderer, William H——. This I tell you, I will extend the right hand of friendship to him, should we ever meet again, although his is stained with blood. H—— was no murderer—he acted in self-defence."

"Then why did the law deal with him so severely?"

"I answer you by a question. Why did Judge —— condemn the son of a celebrated Scotch divine to perpetual servitude, while so many believe him to be as innocent of the crime of murder as the judge himself? For my part, I do. I know the man well."

"I guess who it is to whom you allude. You had him, had you not, under you in the Hulks?"

"The same. Now, what say you to turning in for the night? We will first make up the fire. That done, we will arrange all our worldly goods so that they may form pillows for our heads—and many a

harder one I have slept on. Having no fears as regards Tom, we may enjoy, perhaps, a sleep far more invigorating than that allotted to our nearest and dearest relatives in the other hemisphere."

"With all my heart, for I now confess to being somewhat knocked up; but—but—don't think for one moment that I fear that fellow. He might—he might get at the rum, and then God knows——"

"Not a bit of it," I replied; "all is stowed away safely; and so lightly do I sleep, that I verily believe, if that harmless little animal, the kangaroo rat, were to come within five yards of where I was lying, I should awake."

Lovell, who now appeared to be perfectly satisfied, began at once to arrange his blankets; and although he might have found some little fault as regarded his pillow, he coiled up, and was soon fast asleep, but not before he had looked to the safe keeping of his gun.

Tired as I was, it was some little time before I could close my eyes—not that I had any fear of treachery on the part of Tom; and as to there being the slightest danger from any of the denizens of that dark forest, I believe there was none. It is well known that the snake alone is to be guarded against.

Some of them are of the most deadly kind. The tarantula and the centipede, too, are by no means pleasant visitors—I forgot to enumerate them.”

As I have before said, the nights in Australia are cold towards break of day ; but that did not disturb me, so great was the warmth thrown out by the splendid fire near which I lay. “Well,” I said to myself, “such a spot as this might suit even Zimmermann himself. Surely never was solitude more complete—not the rustling of a leaf, even, to break the dead silence which reigns around.”

At last nature would have her way, and I slept too, an undisturbed sleep of hours, which might have been considerably prolonged, but for Lovell’s exclaiming,

“Holloa ! our fire will be out.”

Opening my eyes, I turned them first in the direction of the savage. There he was, still lying on his face, with his feet to the fire. I verily believe he had never moved from the time when, the night before, he had first made himself comfortable.

“What is the hour, Lovell?” I said, looking up at the sun, which was then high. “Why, we must indeed have slept soundly.”

Looking at his watch, he replied that it was eight

o'clock, and high time for breakfast; before which he also said we might as well make a sort of toilette at the stony creek below us, and not disturb Tom until our return.

Acquiescing in this proposal, I assisted him in procuring more fuel. Having replenished the fire, we both strolled down the bank, where we performed our ablutions. Such as they were, we were grateful for them, and, much refreshed, were soon after busily employed in preparing breakfast.

"Holloa! black feller, are you going to sleep all day?" cried Lovell. "The rum, eh? I thought the drop that I gave you would ensure a good night's rest."

"No, rum not make black feller sleep,—meat do that," replied Tom, springing to his feet.

"Now, go and fetch some water—nice clean water. Tom have good breakfast. Will you have a drop?" I asked, holding up my flask.

"Ye-es," answered the savage, with a grin.

Giving him about half a glass of the spirit, Lovell handed him the two quart pots. Tom immediately started for some hole that was unknown to us, but which, on his return, was proved to con-

tain far superior water to that which we had before made use of.

Our breakfast, of course, was but a repetition of the previous night's feast, and ample justice was done to it by all. That over, and the things packed up, a palaver was held as to our day's amusement. It was decided that we should try our hands at the wild turkey—about the most difficult task a sportsman can undertake, so cunning are those birds, their heads being ever erect and their wits alive to every danger.

From what we could gather from Tom, the native turkey is gregarious. He is but seldom found in the woods, and is difficult to discover, owing to his being of the same colour as the herbage of the prairie. Rather annoyed at finding that our day's beat would again be on the open waste, and that there was great uncertainty as to our even discovering any prey, I questioned Tom as to hunting the native cat, a small animal, by no means resembling our marten cat, but valuable on account of its singularly beautiful and spotted fur. Many months after my first introduction to Tom, and whilst staying at the house of one who had formerly been a servant to my brother, and -who, I regret to say, had come out for his country's good, I gave up much of my time to hunting that animal;

and so numerous have I found them, that as many as twelve a day have fallen to my share. They are always found in rocky places, and are sure to be at home during the day-time. Dogs, of course, are absolutely necessary.

“Tom find plenty cat—want dog, plenty ’possum up tree.”

Telling him that I hoped to have a turn with him at that sport, and that he must bring his dogs, we again placed our swags upon his shoulders, and started very much in the same direction as we had taken the day previous. It was not long before we found ourselves again making our way over the same desolate waste, the heat, if anything, being greater, for there was not a breath of wind to cool the air.

“Here um go,” said Tom, stopping suddenly, and inspecting each blade of grass; “but long ago—think.” Following up the trail, he continued, “Dare um lay down—one—two—three—four—five,” tapping his fingers at the same time.

“Follow up the trail, Tom,” I said, excited at the prospect of an early shot.

“No—um back dare,” pointing in the contrary direction to that which he had at first taken. “Tink same kangaroo killed yesterday.”

And so indeed did we believe the trail to be ; not that either Lovell or myself could make out any tracks whatever.

“Yesterday’s trail, Stretton,” said Lovell ; “what an eye the fellow has !—but let us follow him.”

Tom was now some way ahead of us, scanning every inch of ground, and confident am I that from a wombal to a kangaroo our sable friend could have enlightened us as to the tracks.

“No kangaroo—no turkey ’bout day ; tink, if white feller had um axe, kill ’possum.”

From the last remark of the savage, it was now evident to both of us that little or no sport was to be expected that day ; and suffering as we did from the intense heat, we almost hailed with pleasure the opportunity of once again returning to the forest, without having the stigma of want of pluck attached to our names.

“I vote for getting back into the scrub, Lovell,” I said. “We shall find something to shoot at ; ’tis plain that Tom has not much faith in finding kangaroo or turkey on the heath to-day. As for myself, I long to get into the shade.”

“Not more than I do,” replied my friend. “I wish that fellow Tom had brought his tomahawk with

him, we might have had some fun with the opossums. Confound it, they are all snug in the dead boughs now."

Recalling Tom, who was still far ahead of us, and than whom no pointer could have quartered his ground better, we made him aware of our intentions. As for the black, it appeared to be the same to him whether we continued beating or returned to the scrub. Perhaps he might have shown some little predilection for the latter, Lovell casually dropping a hint that it was time to have something to eat.

"No kangaroo dare, tink—no turkey," said Tom.

"I believe you are right, Tom; and we have decided upon getting back into the forest, where we will have some dinner, and over a pipe decide what are to be our movements."

Tom's eyes glistened at the idea of a pipe, being thoroughly aware that it would be accompanied by a glass of rum and water.

The fatiguing walk of three hours ere we gained the desired shelter of the forest was as uninteresting as could be well imagined. Annoyed at not having seen either feather or fur, and perspiring at every pore, we made our way over the arid waste, scarcely a word

passing between us until the delightful shade of the Eucalyptus invited us to camp.

“Thank God!” said Lovell, throwing his cabbage-tree hat on the ground, and wiping the perspiration from his face—“thank God we are off that cursed heath!—why, it is ten times hotter to-day than it was yesterday.”

Acknowledging how greatly I myself had suffered from the scorching rays of the sun, and expressing my great disappointment with regard to the amount of that morning’s sport, I proposed at once to make our dinners, and beat our way back through the bush to where we had left our party.

That the kangaroo is migratory is well known, and, as I have before said, gregarious. Had we chosen to try our luck one day more on the same beat, our sport might have proved as good as it had turned out bad. No fault was to be found with Tom, who certainly had proved himself an excellent hand at a trail, and as honest as one could wish.

“What think you, Lovell,” I said, as we sat over our dinner, Tom at the time having gone in search of water, “shall we give him his rum and let him go?—he has his tobacco. I have no fear as to our losing our way—we have but to go due west.”

"I should say keep him with us. What cares he where he goes? I intend making him a present of my knife—he appeared to admire it much," replied Lovell.

A few minutes afterwards Tom rejoined us. We explained to him that we were anxious to beat towards home, and wished him to accompany us part of the way. Just as I expected, the poor wretch willingly assented, offering, at the same time, to procure for us some kangaroo, opossum, and bird skins.

"Emu make good blanket. White feller know Emu—big. White feller want um duck? Black feller get it."

"How do you kill the ducks, Tom—with a spear?" inquired Lovell.

"Tom see duck—Tom swim—catch 'im by leg."*

This primitive method of getting at that wary bird certainly astonished both of us, and we gave Tom an unlimited order for ducks as well as skins; for the black Australian duck is without an equal as regards size and flavour. The old bargain meanwhile was settled. We gave Tom his rum and the blanket, to which I added a red shirt—Lovell giving also

* That I have seen done on Anderson's Creek, twenty-five miles from Melbourne. The natives swim under water, and pull the ducks down.

a small looking-glass and an axe. Tom was indeed pleased ; but when my friend drew the knife from his pocket and presented it to him, his joy knew no bounds. Indeed, the Tom of yesterday was not the Tom of to-day. We had some difficulty in learning from him the time at which these skins and ducks might be expected to be delivered ; but finally we made out that at the expiration of a fortnight he would bring them down to the shepherd's hut. That he would keep his word, we knew well—that we intended keeping ours, was equally certain. In reply to a question concerning the expected Corrobbery, Tom promised also to let us know when that event would come off.

Our dinner over, and our reduced swags for the last time placed upon Tom's shoulders, we commenced our homeward beat through as lovely a stretch of forest scenery as could be imagined. The beauty of the scene materially lessened the monotony of the journey, for sport we had literally none, two opossums only being added to our score. As for Tom, he was wonderfully conversable, having thrown off entirely that terseness of speech in which he had hitherto indulged—a change which we attributed either to the present possession of Lovell's knife, or to the prospect of future presents.

At last the top of Dead Man's Gully was reached, and the services of the savage became no longer requisite.

"We will rest here awhile, and have a smoke," I said, throwing myself on the ground. "Tom, you've got the bottle of rum you have so well earned."

"Ye-es," replied Tom, showing his white teeth, and no doubt delighted at the idea of getting royally drunk after our backs were turned.

"Tom," I said, "white feller leave black feller here. There is your bottle of rum. Black feller not get drunk!"

"Rum no make black feller drunk," he replied, seizing the bottle, which I held in my hand.

"Tom," I continued, "no forget the skins. White feller want um duck too. Shepherd's mi mi, mind."*

Nodding an assent, the chief of the Yarra Yarras, without another word, turned and left us, carrying his large blanket under his arm.

"Poor wretch!" said Lovell, following him with his eyes. "It is said, and I believe it, that there is nothing that God hath made which is not good for something. Yet what on earth is that fellow good for but a trail?"

* The term given to their wigwams.

“You may say the same of the reptile tribe, Lovell; what good are they? The fact is, there is so much hid from our eyes, that the less we say on that subject the better.”

We had now both buckled on our swag, and five minutes afterwards were descending the gully. Before night we were once more amongst our friends, who appeared to be rather disappointed at the little we had to show them.

It may not be uninteresting to the reader if I narrate, as a proof of the wonderful power inherent in the New Hollander as a tracksman, the story of three children lost in the bush, who never would have been recovered had it not been through the agency of three natives.

It was about the middle of September, 1864, that two boys, sons of a poor man, were sent by their mother to find some broom, an errand they had frequently gone on before, to a place about a mile from their home. That morning, for the first time, their sister was allowed to accompany them, and to this fact may be attributed the straying of the children far beyond the spot where the broom was usually found. The boys, it is known, had been struck by the beauty of some wild-flowers which they had seen

some days previously at a spot not far distant, to which it is supposed they wished to lead their sister. It is certain that the three children scrambled over a brush fence into an adjoining paddock, with which they were familiar; and that there they gathered their wild-flowers and their broom. On proposing to return, they became confused, went in the opposite direction, and, crossing another paddock, were soon irretrievably lost in the wild heath.

Meantime, the parents' fears had been aroused, and father and mother were searching the paddocks in ever-increasing anxiety and dread. Tidings of the children being lost soon also reached the home station. Men at once turned out, and until long after sunset, indeed until near midnight, when the moon went down, an unceasing search was kept up. But all was in vain. No trace of the little ones' steps could be found; no reply was made to the eager cries of "cooe" that resounded over the plain. The next day the search was renewed, and it was continued no less earnestly, but, alas! with as little success. Word was immediately sent to the neighbouring stations, and men in numbers flocked to Spring Hill to render aid. Next morning saw upwards of thirty horsemen scouring the waste in all

directions, but no track could be found. The following day, at dawn, they returned to their willing labours, most of them quite hopeless, for, as is common in that unsteady climate, that night heavy rain had fallen, followed in the morning by a keen frost. It was argued, therefore, and with reason, that the little ones, so unsheltered and unprovided, could not long survive. On that day, however, two men, far apart from the others, came upon the children's track. Afraid to lose sight of it, they would not for a moment leave it, but spent the night on it; and on the following day one of them carried the joyous news to the others, while his companion remained on the spot.

The owner of the station, who had just returned from a journey, now took command of a company of trackers, and, with a party somewhat better organised, repaired to the place where the track had been discovered, about ten miles from the home-station. With difficulty they followed it through the heath, and had progressed but a short distance when darkness set in. It was an unspeakable grief for these earnest fellows to be obliged to give up the search, even for a time. The anxiety of that night was vastly increased by the state of

the weather. The clouds drew thickly and murkily around, the wind rose, and the rain fell in torrents. All thought the children, exposed to such a tempest, were hopelessly lost, for, after rains so heavy, the tracks, which the day before were so discernible, would be totally obliterated. It was as they feared. The following morning no tracks could be found, and the two next days were occupied in searching for them, but in vain. The following night all hope seemed to be given up; but the father clung to the possibility of recovering his dear ones, and set out for a station thirty miles off, where it was believed that some natives were at work. In his absence the search was continued. A gentleman, a neighbouring squatter, meanwhile joined the party. He was a man of great experience and acuteness, and before the day had far advanced recovered the track. He followed it up very slowly, but surely, often for nearly an hour at a stretch on his hands and knees, still keeping it in view, and pegging as he went along, that what was gained might not be afterwards lost. The whole day was thus occupied. During the night the father returned with three blacks, from behind Mount Elgin, and early the following morning the tracking was resumed at the point where the pegging had been left off

the previous evening. The superiority of the blacks was at once apparent. They detected three tracks where at least only one had been seen before, and they travelled on at a greatly increased pace. Hope revived in every breast, and even the expectation of yet finding the little ones alive was cherished. Occasionally, too, these keen-sighted men were able to divine touching incidents that had probably occurred in the weary journeyings of the children.

“Here little one tired—sit down—big one kneel down, and carry him along. Here trail all night—dark—not see that bush—here fall on him. Here little one tired again; big one kneel down—no able to rise—fall flat on him face”—the very simplicity of their words rendering them more affecting. These little incidents, thus conjectured by the blacks, were afterwards corroborated by the children themselves.

As the party went along, they saw at a short distance a rising ground resembling that near the station to which the children were sent for broom. It was at once supposed that they must have made for this rise, and it was found they had done so. They had fancied that they were at length nearing home; and although at this time they must have been wandering four days on the heath, they forgot not the errand on which

they were sent, but again gathered the broom their mother required, and, having tied it with a rope, went on through the scrub, joyful in the prospect of home, the eldest running on before, and encouraging the other two (as narrated by the children themselves.) But what must have been their disappointment on reaching the other side of the brush, when not the home station, or their father's hut, appeared in view, but a vast ocean of dark and dreary prairie stretching away to the distant horizon. In utter despair, the little fellows untied their bundle and threw away the broom, and, as we may well imagine, shed many bitter tears.

The afternoon of that day was now advancing. The blacks were still on the track, sometimes walking slowly, sometimes at a rapid pace. About three o'clock one of the squatters espied what appeared a fresher track, coming into and crossing that which they were traversing. He called the blacks. They instantly recognized it as the latest, and leaving the one they had been following, struck off in a northerly direction, which in less than a mile brought them to a little sort of harbour, naturally formed by stringy-bark saplings, in which they at once saw that the little wanderers had slept the night before.

The desire to push on, in order to overtake the

children, it might be in their dying hours, now became ardent in the extreme. The father felt as if the Almighty was about to give him his children again.

Once or twice much valuable time had been saved by riding on before the trackers, and picking up the track ahead. The father was now anxious to do the same again, but in what direction to go he knew not. Trusting to God, therefore, he threw the reins on his horse's neck, and suffered him to go in any way he liked. Nor was his trust deceived. The horse set forth at a canter, and soon came on a track full a mile ahead. The tracking party all the while were lessening the distance between themselves and the poor heart-broken father, whom they soon joined. The hour of sunset was drawing near, and it would indeed have been heart-rending, when, as they believed, so near the desired discovery, to be obliged to pause ere the children were found. The father again rode on to a piece of rising ground, from which he saw, a short distance onward, a clump of saplings resembling those among which they had previously halted, and he at once determined to ride on to them ere he turned back. Before he reached the spot, he saw, or fancied that he saw, something flickering in

the wind. Putting spurs to his horse, he cleared the distance almost at a bound, and to his indescribable joy at last found the objects of his anxious search. In a little chamber of saplings, on a bed of broom, curtained and canopied with the boughs of the trees, his three young children lay, the youngest in the middle, carefully wrapped in his sister's frock. They appeared to be in a deep and not unpleasant sleep, which their father feared at once to disturb. The arrival of the trackers, however, soon awoke the wearied sleepers. The eldest first attempted to sit up. His face was worn and emaciated, and his mouth so contracted that his lips failed to cover his teeth; his eyes, which glared wildly, were fixed upon his father; he tried to speak, but the tongue lacked moisture, and he could but groan "Father," and fell back again. The youngest, meanwhile, with a *naïveté* which it is said never deserts him, looked up and exclaimed, "Father, why didn't you come for us sooner? We were 'cooeing' for you!" The little girl, the sister, who had for two successive nights carried her little brother when he could walk no further, and had stripped herself of her frock to cover him from the cold, appeared almost gone. When they took her in their arms she did not even open her eyes, but crouching

herself up, tremulously murmured, "Cold! cold!"

It was about sunset that the children were found, and although it was near eight miles to the nearest hut, the party determined to make for it. As they went along the little ones were fed with crumbs of bread and butter, and on coming to a swamp, were much revived by a little water which was given them. About eight the shepherd's hut was reached, where kindness and a warm bed awaited the children, who for so many nights had lain exposed on the cold and cheerless waste. One affecting incident may be related regarding the young girl. As soon as she got warm in bed, and had come somewhat to herself, she was heard to repeat a part of the evening prayer :

" Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child ;"

and it is still more interesting to know that night after night, when the children lay down on that cold and desolate prairie, sometimes heard by her brothers, sometimes by none but that blessed Saviour himself, who had happily taught her, she sought the care and guardianship of Him who alone could hear her.

Who will now deny that the prayer of those innocents was heard? Who will say that chance led

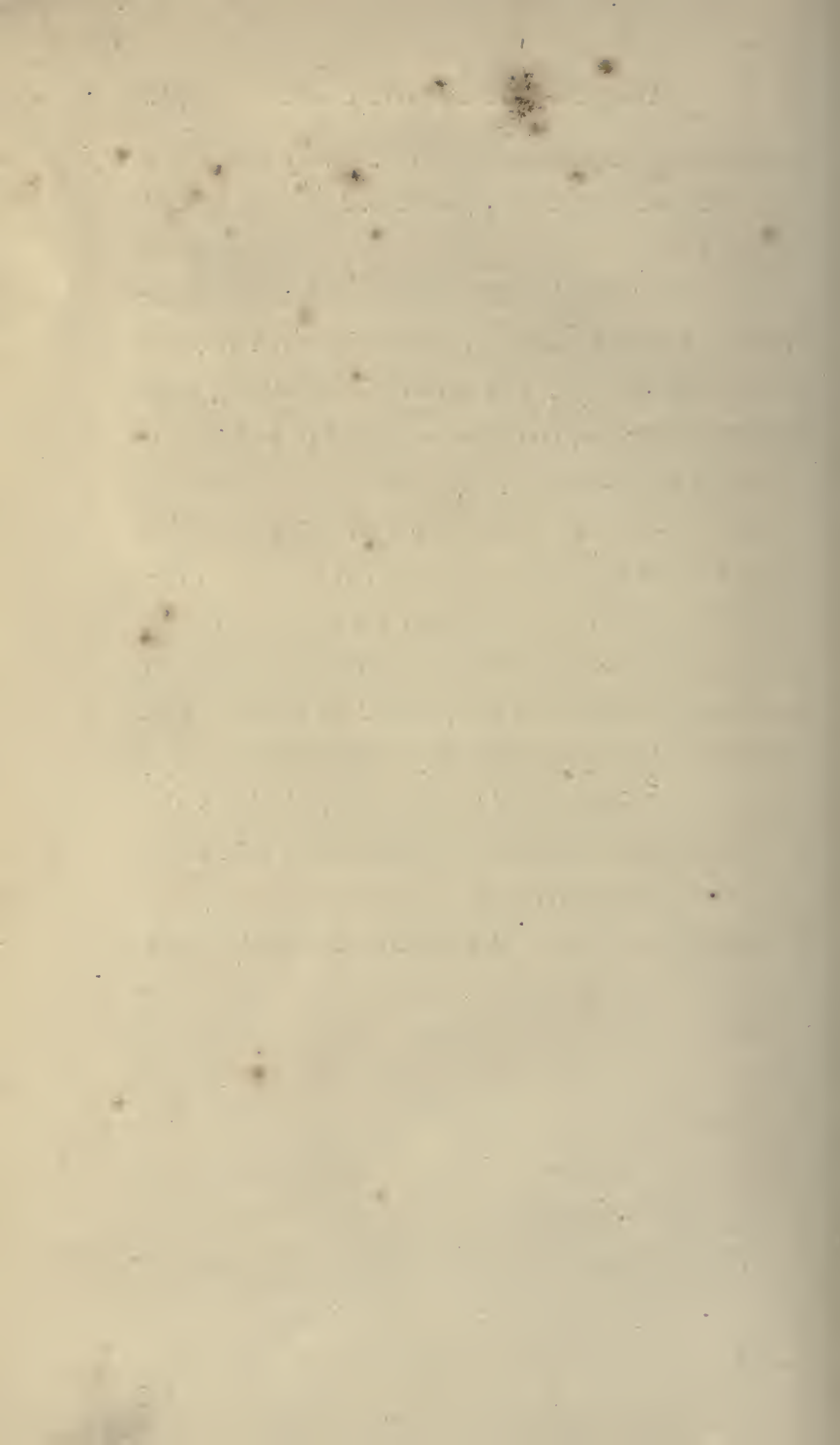
those who were seeking them to the very spot where the children were found, and that at such a critical hour?

It was on a Sunday that they were taken to their father's hut, a distance of about sixteen miles, and there, day by day, through God's assistance, they gathered strength, and were soon able to walk about, although feebly.

It is said that these children were altogether nine days without food of any sort, and at least five without water, with the exception of the rain that fell by night! It is calculated that they must have walked considerably more than sixty miles. It is known that they went twenty the first day, and over four on the last. The main credit of their discovery is due to the blacks—for without their assistance they would never have been found alive.

Who now will say that the "New Hollander" is of no use?

THE END.



13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET, MAY, 1866.

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